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67 Exclusive Recipes from All-Star Bakers

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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EMILY HUTCHINSON'S POINSETTIA COOKIES AND TWINKLING TREE COOKIES
pages 47, 55

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Phone: (205) 995-8860

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5 Ways With Cookies

Whether you like them soft and chewy or crisp and crunchy, we suggest making an extra-large batch of your favorite cookies to try out our tips and tricks this holiday season.

A sprinkle of our star ingredient Heilala vanilla sugar is a special blend that will transform your treats into something extraordinary. Premium organic golden sugar is infused with Heilala Vanilla Extract and mixed with finely ground vanilla beans, making an ideal addition to elevate freshly baked cookies.

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1. **Crème brûlée cookies with a crackling top**

For a cookie bursting with vanilla flavor and a burnt-sugar topping, simply add a layer of royal icing to a butter cookie and sprinkle liberally with vanilla sugar before torching for a crème brûlée like finish.

2. **Creamy fudge loaded with cookie pieces**

Make use of leftover cookies by crushing into small pieces and stirring them through your favourite vanilla bean fudge recipe for a rich, sweet treat. Have fun and experiment with different cookie flavors like orange chocolate or coffee.

3. **Sticky sugared shortbread**

For a double dose of vanilla, make a batch of shortbread and when they're hot out of the oven, brush with vanilla syrup and sprinkle with Heilala Vanilla Sugar.

4. **Pie cookie crumble**

Leftover cookies make fantastic toppings for holiday pies. Simply pulse cookies in a food processor along with half a cup of Heilala Vanilla Sugar and sprinkle over your pie after baking.

5. **Vanilla-flecked snickerdoodles**

Instead of rolling your snickerdoodles in cinnamon sugar before baking, try a dusting of Heilala Vanilla Sugar for a perfectly crunchy flavor that lingers long after the cookies have been devoured.

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TEST KITCHEN

All recipes in each issue pass through the hands of the *Bake from Scratch* test kitchen. Each is flavorful and distinctive and developed with your unique tastes in mind.

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FOUR YEARS AGO, WE BEGAN ONE OF MY FAVORITE *BAKE FROM SCRATCH* TRADITIONS: OUR *HOLIDAY COOKIES* SPECIAL ISSUE.

I envisioned an issue that combined some of the best baking talent with the simple yet sweet tradition of baking holiday cookies. And like a present waiting under the tree, the reality has far surpassed my imagination.

From this issue came another, less official holiday tradition: "Christmas in July," a two-week marathon during which our team bakes every recipe that is submitted for our *Holiday Cookies* special issue. I took on 12 of those recipes this year—and not just because I jump at any excuse to bake cookies. We are testing recipes from some of our dearest friends, and we're baking them in our home kitchens. So, when we say each of these recipes is worth the time and butter, we mean it.

As always, we're packing this issue with a star-studded roster of bakers. Rebecca Firth brings spice, spirits, and her typical cookie prowess to our pages. During testing, I found her Chocolate Cinnamon Crinkle Cookies (page 34) life-giving and beautiful. Emily Hutchinson has upped the cookie-decorating game, dazzling us with snow globes, stockings, and our gorgeous cover stars, Poinsettia Cookies (page 47) and Twinkling Tree Cookies (page 55). Mike Johnson offers several delicious bars and cookies, including one of his famous brownie recipes, and I will never stop raving about his Peppermint Patty Brownies (page 62). Erin Clarkson, our favorite Kiwi baker, gives us fabulous new recipes to obsess over, like Cranberry Shortcake Bars (page 76). Laura Kasavan delivers her usual buttery, crumbly comfort but also surprises with her Cranberry Cheesecake Cookies (page 98). Finally, Sarah Kieffer finishes off with an epic pan bang. Along with cheesecake bars and pumpkin blondies, Sarah offers us Chocolate-Mint Pan-Banging Cookies (page 112).

Bake from Scratch offers several of our own instant holiday classics, like Peppermint Mocha Red Velvet Marble Cookies and Frangipane-Stuffed Ginger Cookies. I kick off our collection with a recipe that uses royal icing as a sweet, smooth topping, a tradition my grandmother Mimi introduced me to when I was a boy. For my Mimosa Cutout Cookies, I use my old trick of dipping baked cookies into the royal icing—no piping required—to create an effortlessly beautiful cookie. It's holiday cookie wisdom I hope to pass on to the next generation of bakers.

So, bakers, pick your cookies and preheat your oven; it's all sweet satisfaction from here.

Happy baking,

Brian

Brian Hart Hoffman
Editor-in-Chief

MIMOSA CUTOUT COOKIES

Makes 35 cookies

I paired orange zest-packed dough with bright Sparkling Wine Royal Icing to create a mimosa-flavored holiday cookie. This elegant showstopper is surprisingly simple to make thanks to an easy icing method. These cookies are dipped in royal icing, rather than piped and flooded, before getting finished off with a mix of white sprinkles for an easy yet sophisticated look.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon (8 grams) tightly packed orange zest
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
3¼ cups (406 grams) all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
Sparkling Wine Royal Icing (recipe follows)
Garnish: assorted white sprinkles

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, confectioners' sugar, and orange zest at low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium-low, and beat until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg and vanilla bean paste, beating until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until a dough forms. Divide dough in half; shape each half into a 7-inch disk. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. On a lightly floured surface, roll half of dough to ¼-inch thickness. Using desired cutters dipped in flour, cut dough; using a large offset spatula dipped in flour, place cut dough ¾ to 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Reroll and cut scraps as needed. Repeat with remaining dough. (See Note.)
5. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are lightly golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool on pan for 1 minute. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Dip tops of cooled cookies in Sparkling Wine Royal Icing; pull straight out, and lightly shake back and forth, letting excess drip off as much as possible. Quickly turn cookies icing side up; using a wooden pick, spread icing into an even layer, popping and filling any air bubbles, if necessary. Garnish with sprinkles, if desired. Let stand until dry, at least 4 hours.

Note: *If dough is refrigerated for a longer period of time, let stand at room temperature until slightly softened, 10 to 20 minutes.*

Sparkling Wine Royal Icing

Makes 2½ cups

16 ounces (454 grams) confectioners' sugar
6 tablespoons (90 grams) warm water (90°F/32°C to 110°F/43°C)
2½ tablespoons (25.5 grams) meringue powder
2½ to 3½ tablespoons (37.5 to 52.5 grams) sparkling wine, room temperature (70°F/21°C)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat confectioners' sugar, 6 tablespoons (90 grams) warm water, and meringue powder at low speed until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Increase mixer speed to medium; beat until mixture is the consistency of toothpaste, 3 to 5 minutes. Add sparkling wine, ½ to 1 teaspoon (2.5 to 5 grams) at a time, until icing reaches "10-second" consistency. (A ribbon of icing drizzled on surface should take 10 seconds to sink back into icing.)
2. Transfer icing to a large shallow bowl; cover with a damp paper towel, and let stand for 20 minutes. Using a wooden pick, pop and fill as many air bubbles that rise to the surface as possible before using.

PRO TIPS

Feel free to flavor your royal icing with your favorite extract to taste. Thin to 10-second consistency using room temperature water (70°F/21°C).

For a little stronger sparkling wine flavor, place 1½ cups (360 grams) sparkling wine in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; cook until reduced to ¼ cup (60 grams). Transfer mixture to a small bowl, and let cool to room temperature (70°F/21°C). Use reduced sparkling wine as directed to thin royal icing to 10-second consistency.

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WALNUT TASSIES

These buttery, bite-size roasted walnut oil pastry crusts are packed with a sweet walnut filling. While the toasted nuts are key, La Tourangelle Roasted Walnut Oil is the real star, bringing an even deeper rich walnut flavor to these holiday-ready tassies. In addition to creating a lovely crust for the tassies, the roasted walnut oil pastry crust is incredibly versatile. Consider using it as the nutty base crust for your next pie, tart, or galette!

Makes 12 tassies

- 1½ cups (188 grams) plus 2 teaspoons (6 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 tablespoon (12 grams) granulated sugar
- 1⅛ teaspoons (3 grams) kosher salt, divided
- 8 tablespoons (88 grams) La Tourangelle Roasted Walnut Oil, divided
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams)
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) cold whole milk
- ¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon packed orange zest (optional)
- ⅓ cup (113 grams) clover honey
- 1 large egg (50 grams)
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- ½ cup (57 grams) chopped toasted walnuts
- 12 raw walnut halves (24 grams)

Garnish: confectioners' sugar, melted 64% cacao semisweet chocolate

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. In a large bowl, whisk together 1½ cups (188 grams) flour, granulated sugar, and 1 teaspoon (3 grams) salt. Stir in 7 tablespoons (77 grams) oil just until dry ingredients are moistened.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together egg yolk and cold milk. Add egg yolk mixture to flour mixture, 1 tablespoon (12 grams) at a time, stirring until a dough forms.
4. Lightly spray a 12-cup muffin pan with cooking spray. (See PRO TIP.)
5. Divide dough into 12 portions (about 24 grams each); place 1 portion in each prepared muffin cup, pressing into bottom and ¾ inch up sides. (Crusts will be about ⅛ inch thick.)
6. In a medium bowl, whisk together brown sugar, orange zest (if using), remaining 2 teaspoons (6 grams) flour, and remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt. Whisk in honey, egg, vanilla, and remaining 1 tablespoon (11 grams) oil until well combined. Stir in toasted walnuts. Divide sugar mixture evenly among prepared crusts (about 4 teaspoons [24 grams] each), stirring filling every few scoops to evenly distribute walnuts. Top each with 1 walnut half.
7. Bake until filling is puffed and set and crust is golden brown, 15 to 17 minutes. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes. Carefully remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Garnish with confectioners' sugar and melted chocolate, if desired.

PRO TIP
Line each greased muffin cup with a 7x1-inch parchment strip to help get baked tassies out of the pan more easily.

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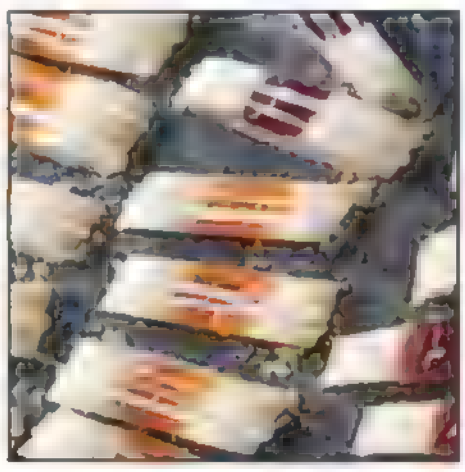
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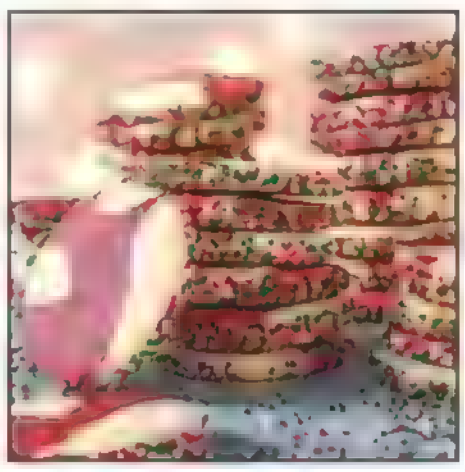
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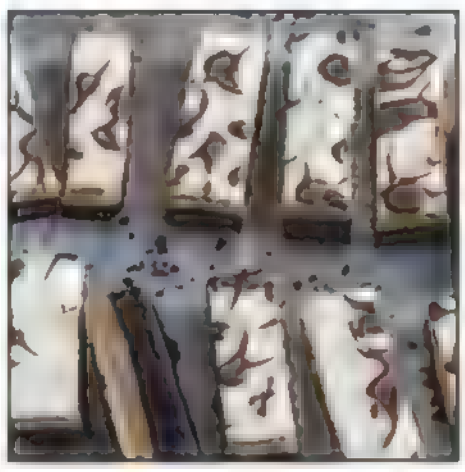
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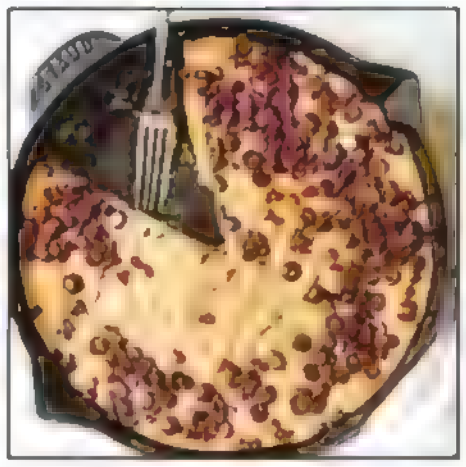
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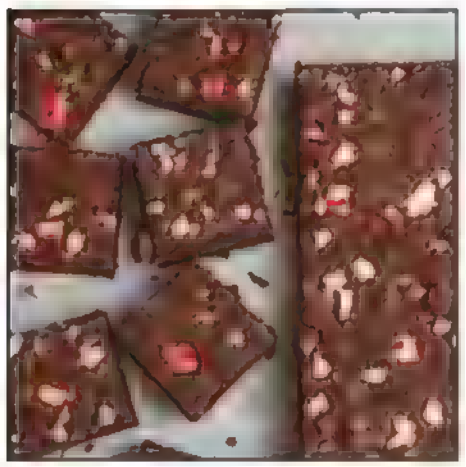

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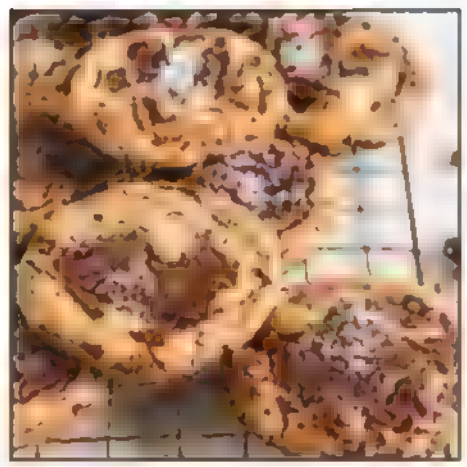

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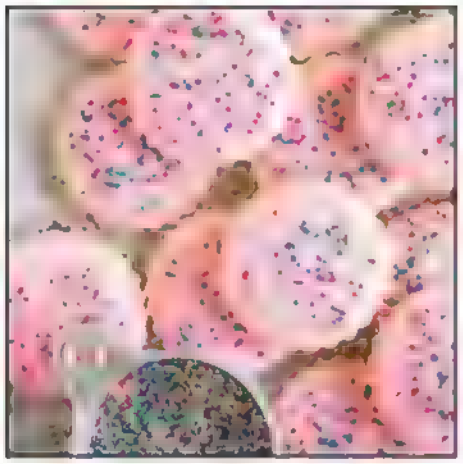

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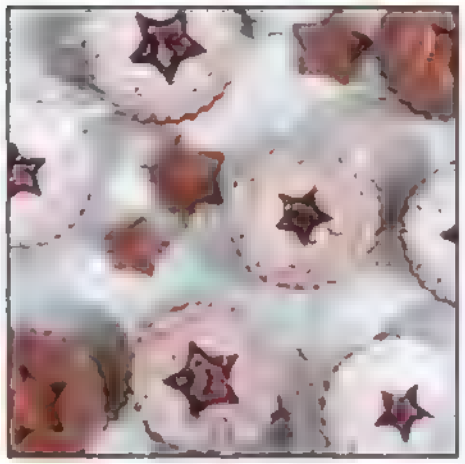

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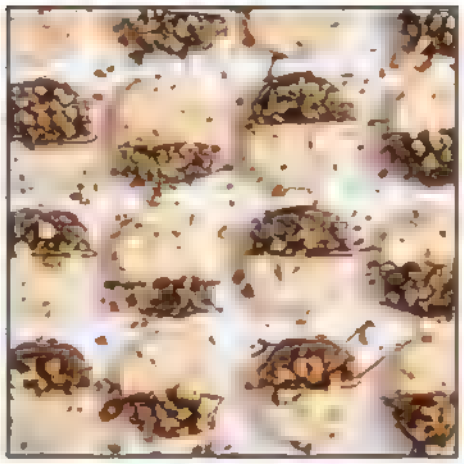

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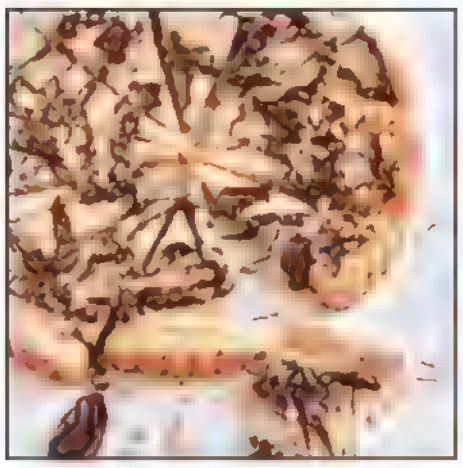

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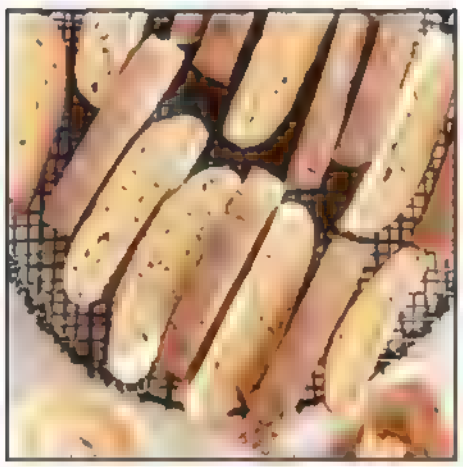

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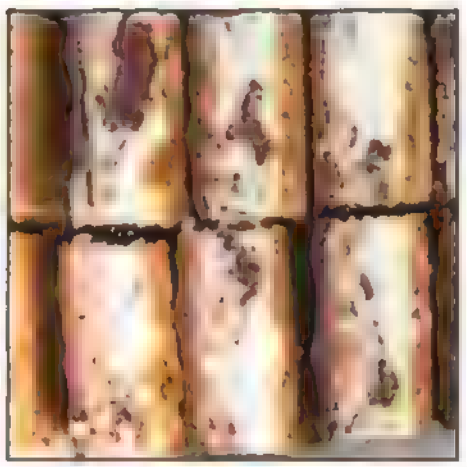

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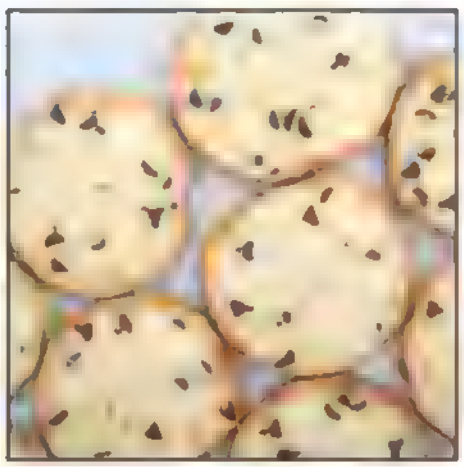

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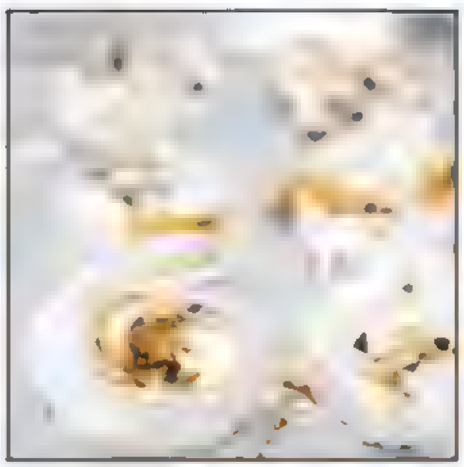

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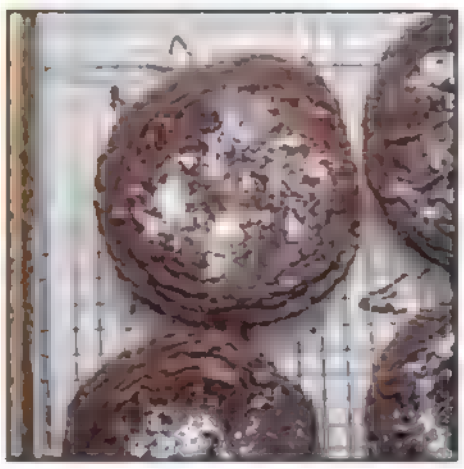

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BROWN BUTTER PECAN COOKIES
with Chocolate Chips & Cranberries

1 cup Schermer Pecan Halves chopped and roasted plus extra halves to top each cookie
2 sticks salted butter, room temperature
3/4 cup dark brown sugar
1 1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 tbsp vanilla extract
2 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup dried cranberries

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a skillet over medium heat, melt one stick of butter and allow it to brown lightly until it smells toasted

2. Beat together the remaining 1 stick of butter, cooled brown butter, brown sugar and granulated sugar until combined. Beat in the eggs and vanilla until creamy. Add flour and baking soda. Once combined stir in the chocolate chips, pecans and cranberries

3. Spoon the dough onto a prepared baking sheet and bake for 8-10 minutes. A couple of minutes before removing from the oven, top with a pecan half and finish baking.

4. Allow to cool for 5 minutes and enjoy!

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THE *BAKE FROM SCRATCH* HOLIDAY COOKIE COLLECTION

For this issue, we created a wish list of flavors for our holiday cookie plate. We were dreaming of marzipan-stuffed gingerbread cookies, White Russian-inspired bars, and a marbled red velvet cookie that would enchant the eyes and the taste buds. We're happy to say that this holiday season, we've gotten exactly what we wished for.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE / RECIPE DEVELOPMENT BY TRICIA MANZANERO / FOOD STYLING BY VANESSA ROCCHIO / STYLING BY LUCY FINNEY

Creamy White Russian Bars
page 26

FRANGIPANE-STUFFED GINGER COOKIES

Makes 18 cookies

Stuffed cookies are just better. In this recipe, an aromatic ginger cookie dough gets a soft and chewy Frangipane Filling, pairing nutty decadence with warm spice.

- ⅓ cup (76 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ⅓ cup (73 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (85 grams) molasses (not blackstrap)
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon (8 grams) cornstarch
- 1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground ginger
- ¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- Frangipane Filling (recipe follows)
- ¾ cup (85 grams) sliced almonds, roughly crushed
- ½ cup (100 grams) sanding sugar or sparkling sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add molasses and egg; beat until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, ginger, salt, baking soda, cinnamon, baking powder, cloves, and cardamom. Add flour mixture to butter mixture all at once; beat at low speed just until combined. Cover and freeze for 40 minutes.
3. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
4. Divide Frangipane Filling into 18 portions (about 1¼ teaspoons [7 grams] each), and place on prepared pan. Shape each portion into a 1½-inch-wide disk. Cover and set aside.
5. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
6. In a small shallow bowl, place almonds. In another small shallow bowl, place sanding sugar or sparkling sugar.
7. Divide dough into 36 portions (about 15 grams each); flatten portions into 2-inch-wide disks. Place 1 Frangipane Filling disk in center of 1 dough disk; cover with a second dough disk, and crimp edges closed. Gently shape into a ball. Roll in almonds; roll in sanding sugar or sparkling sugar. (See Note.) Repeat with remaining dough and remaining Frangipane Filling. Place dough balls 1½ to 2 inches apart on prepared pans; gently flatten to ¾-inch thickness, pressing together any cracks in edges, if necessary. Sprinkle tops with sanding sugar or sparkling sugar.
8. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are just set and bottoms are golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool on pans for 3 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

Note: *If sliced almonds and sanding or sparkling sugar aren't sticking as well, lightly dampen hands with water before rolling and coating dough balls.*

Frangipane Filling

Makes about ½ cup

- ⅔ cup (64 grams) super-fine blanched almond flour
- 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons (28 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
- ½ teaspoon (2 grams) almond extract

1. In a small bowl, stir together flour and sugar until well combined. Add butter, egg yolk, and almond extract; stir until well combined, kneading together by hand if needed.

ORANGE-VANILLA JAM RIBBONS

Makes about 36 cookies

Taking a cue from the traditional Finnish raspberry ribbons, this dough is formed into a log that receives a sweet channel of jam; then it's baked and sliced to form crunchy, jam-filled cookies. In a departure from the original recipe, we added orange zest to the dough and have both apricot preserves and raspberry jam represented.

¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
¼ cup (30 grams) confectioners' sugar
¼ teaspoon packed orange zest
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1½ teaspoons (9 grams) vanilla bean paste
2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
4 tablespoons (64 grams) seedless raspberry jam or apricot preserves*
Orange Glaze (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, sugars, and orange zest at medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg and vanilla bean paste until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture all at once; beat at low speed just until combined.
4. Turn out dough onto a clean surface, and divide into 4 portions (about 148 grams each). Roll each portion into a 10-inch-long log (about 1 inch thick). Place logs 1½ to 2 inches apart on a sheet of parchment paper; flatten each log until about 1¼ inches wide. Using a thin rounded spoon handle or a finger, make a ¾-inch-wide, ¼-inch-deep channel lengthwise down center of each log. (Dough logs will now be about 1½ inches wide.) Transfer dough logs, still on parchment, to a baking sheet.
5. In a small bowl, whisk jam or preserves until smooth; spoon into a small pastry or resealable plastic bag, and cut a ½-inch opening in tip or corner. Pipe jam or preserves into channels (about 1 tablespoon [16 grams] each), spreading into an even layer as needed.
6. Bake until edges are lightly golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Using a serrated knife, cut logs diagonally crosswise into 1-inch-thick strips, wiping knife clean between cuts. Transfer to a wire rack set over a parchment-lined baking sheet; let cool completely.
7. Spoon Orange Glaze into a small pastry or resealable plastic bag; cut a ¼-inch opening in tip or corner. Drizzle glaze onto cooled cookies; let stand until set, about 15 minutes.

**We used Smucker's Seedless Red Raspberry Jam and Apricot Preserves.*

Orange Glaze

Makes about ⅓ cup

1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
1½ tablespoons (22.5 grams) fresh orange juice

1. In a small bowl, stir together confectioners' sugar and orange juice until smooth and well combined. Use immediately.

PEPPERMINT MOCHA RED VELVET MARBLE COOKIES

Makes about 54 cookies

Red velvet gets a magically marbled look in these slice-and-bake cookies. Two doughs—one creamy peppermint and one crimson mocha—get folded and swirled together before being rolled in festive nonpareils.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1¼ cups (250 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature and divided
- 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract
- 4 teaspoons (8 grams) dark-roast instant coffee granules
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) water
- 1 tablespoon (5 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- Red gel food coloring*
- ½ cup (100 grams) holiday nonpareils*

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium-low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in 1 egg (50 grams) until well combined.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, salt, and baking powder. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined. Transfer half of dough (about 447 grams) to a medium bowl; gently knead in peppermint extract. Cover and set aside.

3. In a small bowl, stir together instant coffee and 1 teaspoon (5 grams) water until granules dissolve. Add coffee mixture and cocoa to dough in stand mixer bowl; beat at low speed until combined. Add food coloring until desired color is reached, kneading together by hand as needed.

4. Divide each dough into 10 portions (about 44 grams each). Layer pieces, in a random, alternating fashion, into 1 large dough log. Cut log in half, and shape each half into a 7-inch-long log (about 2 inches

thick). Wrap each log in plastic wrap; while holding ends of plastic wrap, roll log over work surface, creating a more rounded shape. Refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours. (See Note.)
5. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
6. In a large rimmed baking dish or plate, place nonpareils.
7. In a small bowl, whisk remaining 1 egg (50 grams). Working with 1 dough log at a time, unwrap log, and brush outside with egg; roll in nonpareils.
8. Working in batches, cut each log crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices; round edges, if necessary, and roll in nonpareils, if desired. Place, cut side down, 1 to 1¼ inches apart on prepared pans, flattening slightly with your hand so dough rounds are flush with pan. (If dough rounds crack when flattening, simply press and smooth back together.)
9. Bake until set and bottoms are lightly golden, about 10 minutes. Let cool on pans for 2 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

**We used Wilton Color Right Performance Food Coloring and Wilton Holiday Nonpareils.*

Note: *Let dough that has been refrigerated for longer time spans stand at room temperature until slightly softened and easier to slice, 15 to 30 minutes.*

CREAMY WHITE RUSSIAN BARS

Makes 32 bars
(photo on page 23)

The elegant White Russian cocktail is the delectable inspiration for these cheesecake bars loaded with coffee liqueur and cream. We added velvety black cocoa to the mix to create the tuxedo of dessert bars: always classy, never out of style.

Black Cocoa Shortcrust (recipe follows)
- **3 (8-ounce) packages (680 grams) cream cheese, room temperature and divided**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) coffee liqueur***
- **2½ teaspoons (5 grams) dark-roast instant coffee granules**
- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **2 tablespoons (16 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **3 teaspoons (12 grams) vanilla extract, divided**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) heavy whipping cream**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) black cocoa powder**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend almost to top of pan.
2. Let Black Cocoa Shortcrust stand at room temperature until slightly softened, 10 to 15 minutes, if necessary. Transfer dough to prepared pan, pressing to cover bottom of pan. Top with a piece of parchment paper, letting excess extend over edges of pan. Add pie weights.
3. Bake until edges are set and crust is fragrant, 15 to 20 minutes. Carefully remove parchment and weights. Let cool in pan on a wire rack for 25 minutes. Leave oven on.
4. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat 2 packages (454 grams) cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
5. In a small bowl, stir together liqueur and instant coffee until granules dissolve. Add liqueur mixture, ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar, flour, ¾ teaspoon (3 grams) vanilla, and salt to cream cheese; beat until well combined, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Pour cream cheese mixture onto prepared crust, spreading into an even layer with a small offset spatula. Gently tap sides of pan several times to release any air bubbles, popping any that rise to the surface with a wooden pick.
6. Bake until edges are set, top has a dulled finish, center is almost set, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 150°F (66°C) to 155°F (68°C), about 20 minutes. Immediately run a knife around pan to loosen bars from parchment; let cool in pan on a wire rack for 1½ to 2 hours.
7. Clean bowl of stand mixer and paddle attachment. Using the paddle attachment, beat remaining 1 package (226 grams) cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add cream, remaining ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar, and remaining 2¼ teaspoons (9 grams) vanilla; beat until smooth and well combined. Transfer ¼ cup (about 54 grams) cream cheese mixture to a small bowl; stir in black cocoa.
8. Spoon and spread remaining cream cheese mixture onto cooled cheesecake layer in pan. Drop small dollops of black cocoa mixture on top of cream cheese mixture; using a wooden pick, swirl as desired, being careful not to hit cheesecake layer underneath. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to overnight, loosely covering with foil only when completely cool to prevent condensation from forming on top.
9. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Using a warm, dry knife, cut into bars.

**We used Kahlúa.*

Black Cocoa Shortcrust

Makes 1 (13x9-inch) crust

- **3 cups plus 2 tablespoons (391 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ cup (43 grams) black cocoa powder**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 cup (227 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**

1. In the work bowl of a food processor, place flour, sugar, black cocoa, and salt; pulse until combined. Add cold butter, and pulse until butter pieces are no larger than ⅛ to ¼ inch. Add eggs; pulse just until dough comes together.
2. Turn out dough, and shape into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 25 minutes before using.

Chocolate Cinnamon Crinkle Cookies
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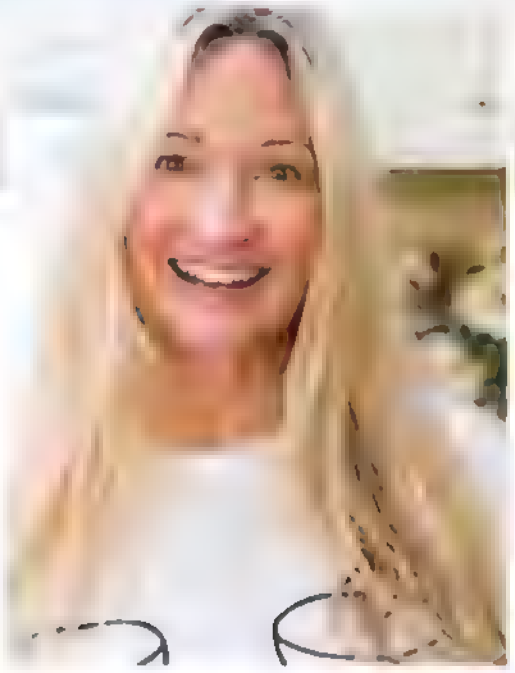

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY
REBECCA FIRTH

REBECCA FIRTH

Rebecca Firth is a food writer, a photographer, the creator of the sweet-focused blog *DisplacedHousewife*, and author of the best-selling cookbook *The Cookie Book*. Her focus is on recipes that are accessible, delicious, and loaded with "heaps of jazz hands." Rebecca was a finalist for the 2017 Saveur Blog Award (Baking & Sweets category). Her next cookbook, *The Cake Book*, will be released in fall 2021. She lives with her family in the Santa Ynez Valley, California.

Bittersweet Orange Cookies
with Campari Buttercream
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FIVE-SPICE CRANBERRY JAM THUMBPRINT COOKIES

Makes 21 cookies

I love these little thumbprint cookies. They are a cinch to throw together and require zero fridge time. The Five-Spice Cranberry Jam is a holiday favorite in my house—consider making extra to serve with your next cocktail hour cheese board!

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened and cut into 8 pieces
- ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
- 2 tablespoons (30 grams) whole milk, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) almond extract
- 1 cup (125 grams) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (64 grams) bread flour
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) sea salt
- ½ cup (60 grams) confectioners' sugar
- Five-Spice Cranberry Jam (recipe follows)

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line several baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg yolk, milk, and almond extract, and beat at low speed for 1 minute.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flours, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until dough comes together, stopping to scrape sides and bottom of bowl. Using a 1-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and roll into balls; place 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Using your thumb, press down center of each dough ball. Freeze or refrigerate for 10 minutes.
4. Bake, one batch at a time, until tops are dry to the touch, about 11 minutes. Using the curved end of a wooden spoon, immediately press down centers. Let cool on pan for 5 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks.
5. Sift confectioners' sugar over cooled cookies. Spoon 1 teaspoon (7 grams) Five-Spice Cranberry Jam into center of each cookie.

Note: *These are best served the same day they are made. If you want to prepare them ahead of time, wait to sift with confectioners' sugar and fill with the Five-Space Cranberry Jam until just before serving.*

Five-Spice Cranberry Jam

Makes about 1 cup

- 1½ cups (165 grams) fresh or thawed frozen cranberries
- ⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons (12 grams) tightly packed orange zest
- ¼ cup (60 grams) fresh orange juice
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) Chinese five-spice powder

1. In a medium saucepan, bring cranberries, sugar, and orange zest and juice to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat, and simmer until liquid is reduced, about 15 minutes. Using the edge of a spatula, mash cranberries. Stir in five-spice powder. Transfer to a heatproof bowl, and let cool completely before using. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

EGGNOG SAMMIES WITH SPICED RUM BUTTERCREAM

Makes 24 sandwich cookies

Nothing says the holidays to me more than eggnog. These get a little crisp from the sparkling sugar they're generously rolled in but are still incredibly tender to the bite . . . and don't even get me started on this buttercream! The base is a Swiss meringue made with brown sugar, which pairs perfectly with the spices, vanilla, and rum added at the end. Consider this the holiday sandwich cookie of your dreams.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **1¾ cups (350 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1 tablespoon (14 grams) oil, such as sunflower seed oil or olive oil**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **1½ teaspoons (6 grams) rum extract**
- **1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1¼ cups (159 grams) bread flour**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) sea salt**
- **1 teaspoon grated fresh nutmeg**
- **¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **½ cup (100 grams) sparkling sugar**
- **Spiced Rum Buttercream (recipe follows)**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Reduce mixer speed to low; add oil in a slow, steady stream, beating until well combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Add rum extract, and beat for 1 minute.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt, nutmeg, and cinnamon. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed just until combined and no streaks of flour remain. Cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 2 hours.

3. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line several baking sheets with parchment paper.

4. In a small shallow bowl, place sparkling sugar.

5. Using a 1-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and roll into balls. Roll in sparkling sugar, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans.

6. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are slightly bronzed and centers are puffed, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks.

7. Place Spiced Rum Buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a small round piping tip. Pipe buttercream onto flat side of half of cookies. Place remaining cookies, flat side down, on top of buttercream, pressing down slightly. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Spiced Rum Buttercream

Makes about 3 cups

- **¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **4 large egg whites (120 grams)**
- **¼ teaspoon sea salt**
- **1 cup (227 grams) slightly chilled unsalted butter, cubed**
- **½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved (optional)**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) rum**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon**
- **½ teaspoon grated fresh nutmeg**

1. In the heatproof bowl of a stand mixer, combine brown sugar, egg whites, and salt. Place over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking constantly, until mixture is thick and frothy and no longer feels gritty when rubbed between 2 fingers and an instant-read thermometer registers 160°F (71°C).

2. Return bowl to stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, beat at medium-high speed until meringue and bowl are cool to the touch, about 15 minutes.

3. Switch to the paddle attachment. With mixer on medium speed, add butter, 1 cube at a time, beating until combined after each addition. (If mixture curdles, your butter may be too cold. If mixture is soupy, you may need to refrigerate the buttercream.) Beat until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Beat in reserved vanilla bean seeds (if using), rum, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Use immediately.

CHOCOLATE CINNAMON CRINKLE COOKIES

Makes 28 cookies

These chocolate crinkle cookies are loaded with a whopping 1½ tablespoons (9 grams) ground cinnamon that perfectly complements the rich chocolate flavor of the cookies. They are delightfully chewy but with the perfect amount of crunch from the sugary exterior. You can roll these cookies in either granulated sugar or sparkling sugar—both work wonderfully!

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **1½ tablespoons (9 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract**
- **2¾ cups (344 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ cup (43 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking soda**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) sea salt**
- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar or sparkling sugar**

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line several baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, 1½ cups (300 grams) granulated sugar, brown sugar, and cinnamon at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Beat in vanilla until well combined, about 1 minute.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined.
4. In a small shallow bowl, place remaining ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar; in another small shallow bowl, place sparkling sugar.
5. Using a 2-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and roll into balls. Roll dough balls in granulated sugar or sparkling sugar to coat. Place 3 inches apart on prepared pans.
6. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are set and centers are puffed, about 9 minutes. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

PRO TIP
If you'd like the cookies to spread less, freeze the dough balls for 10 minutes before rolling in sugar; proceed with recipe as directed.

Rebeccas

• MUST-BAKE •

"I have to say the Peppermint Bark Bars. The cookie base is soft, chewy, and a mix between a snickerdoodle and a sugar cookie—so good. The thick layer of ganache mingling with the crushed peppermint candies makes each bite a holiday flavor party. I could not stop eating them when I was testing this recipe. Bonus: they're super easy to bake!"

PEPPERMINT BARK COOKIE BARS

Makes 12 bars

For the base of these bars, I went for a sugar cookie-meets-snickerdoodle mash-up. These are ridiculously delicious and are just oozing with holiday cheer. The cookie base sinks a bit after baking, but don't fret. It makes the perfect valley to hold all of the peppermint and ganache goodness.

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- 1 cup (125 grams) all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup (85 grams) bread flour
- 2 teaspoons (6 grams) cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) sea salt
- 1 cup (170 grams) finely chopped 56% cacao dark chocolate
- ¾ cup (180 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (30 grams) heavy whipping cream, divided
- ¼ cup (43 grams) finely chopped white chocolate
- 4 to 5 drops AmeriColor Bright White Soft Gel Paste (optional) (see Notes)
- ¾ cup (113 grams) crushed peppermint candies (about 22 candies)

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Butter an 8-inch square baking dish. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, add egg and egg yolk, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Add vanilla, and beat for 1 minute.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flours, cream of tartar, baking soda, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed just until combined. Gently press dough into bottom of prepared pan.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 30 to 33 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack.
5. In the top of a double boiler, combine dark chocolate and ¾ cup (180 grams) cream. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat, and let cool, stirring occasionally.
6. In the top of a double boiler, combine white chocolate and remaining 2 tablespoons (30 grams) cream. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat, and let stand until cool to the touch, stirring occasionally. As it cools, stir in soft gel paste (if using).
7. Sprinkle candies on top of cooled cookie base. Pour cooled dark chocolate ganache over candies; drizzle white chocolate ganache on top. Using the tip of a wooden pick, draw several figure eights through ganache layer. Refrigerate until ganache layer is set, 2 to 3 hours.
8. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Notes: *White chocolate often has a yellowish hue to it. You can add AmeriColor Soft Gel Paste in Bright White to brighten it up a bit.*

The cookie dough is difficult to press into the pan. Use an offset spatula or damp hands to evenly press it in.

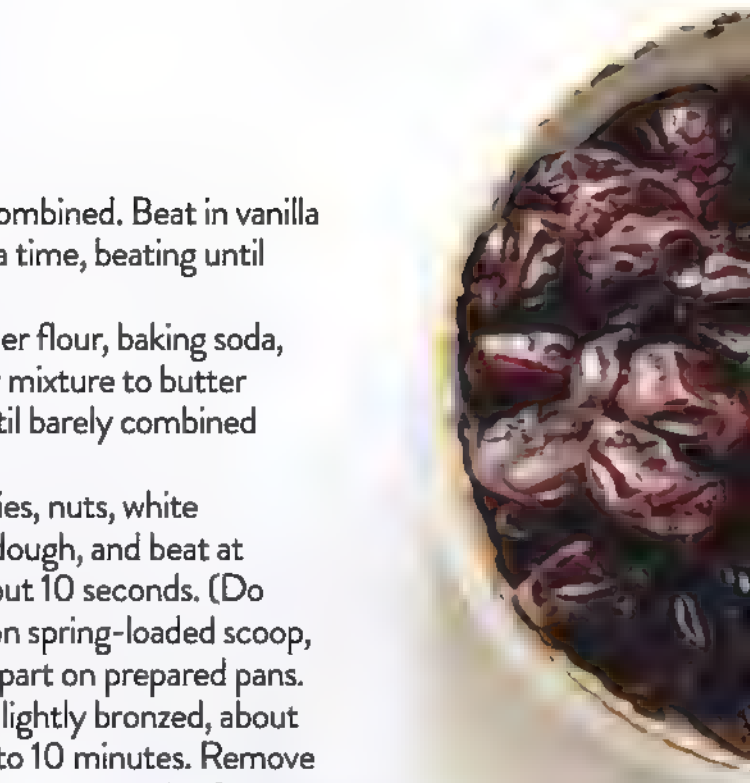
TOASTED MACADAMIA NUT AND CRANBERRY CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes 29 cookies

These cookies are everything you want in a holiday cookie: cozy from the mega brown sugar-caramel flavors, ample at 3 tablespoons of dough per cookie, and completely loaded with flavor and texture from the crunchy toasted macadamia nuts, the chewy and bright cranberries, and the rich white and earthy dark chocolate bits. If you're feeling frisky, soak the dried cranberries overnight in 3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 grams) bourbon before baking. The flavor is subtle but delicious!

- 1 cup (128 grams) dried cranberries
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1½ cups (330 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (112 grams) olive oil
- 1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 2¾ cups (344 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) sea salt
- ½ cup (57 grams) coarsely chopped toasted macadamia nuts
- ½ cup (85 grams) coarsely chopped white chocolate
- ½ cup (85 grams) coarsely chopped 56% cacao dark chocolate

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line several baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a small heatproof bowl, combine cranberries and boiling water to cover; set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides and bottom of bowl. Reduce mixer speed to low; add oil in a slow, steady stream, beating just until combined. Beat in vanilla until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until barely combined and a few streaks of flour remain.
5. Drain cranberries; add cranberries, nuts, white chocolate, and dark chocolate to dough, and beat at low speed just until combined, about 10 seconds. (Do not overmix.) Using a 3-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans.
6. Bake, one batch at a time, until lightly bronzed, about 9 minutes. Let cool on pans for 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.



PRO TIPS

If using frozen pomegranate arils, let thaw and press out any extra moisture before using in the recipe.

Blondies are best when slightly underbaked and when you let them cool completely before cutting into them.

DARK CHOCOLATE POMEGRANATE SKILLET BLONDIES

Makes 6 to 8 blondies

This wonder combines your favorite blondie components—rich caramel flavor and lots of vanilla—but adds in the tart bite of pomegranate and dark chocolate earthiness. I love how they look in a cast-iron skillet, but you can also use an 11x8-inch baking dish.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter**
- **1¾ cups (385 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature**
- **1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **1½ teaspoons (4.5 grams) sea salt**
- **2¾ cups (344 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **¾ cup (128 grams) 56% cacao dark chocolate chips**
- **⅔ cup (99 grams) pomegranate arils**

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Butter a 10-inch cast-iron skillet.
2. In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Increase heat to medium-high, and cook, stirring constantly, until butter turns a medium-brown color and has a nutty aroma, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and pour into the bowl of a stand mixer. Set aside until cool to the touch.
3. Add brown sugar, eggs, and egg yolk to browned butter; using the paddle attachment, beat at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add vanilla, and beat for 1 minute.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined and no streaks of flour remain. Press half of dough into prepared skillet; using the back of a spatula, smooth top. Sprinkle half of chocolate and half of pomegranate arils onto dough in skillet. Top with remaining dough, smoothing top, and sprinkle with remaining chocolate and remaining pomegranate arils.
5. Bake until edges are golden and set and center jiggles slightly, about 33 to 35 minutes. Let cool completely in skillet. Best served the same day they are made.

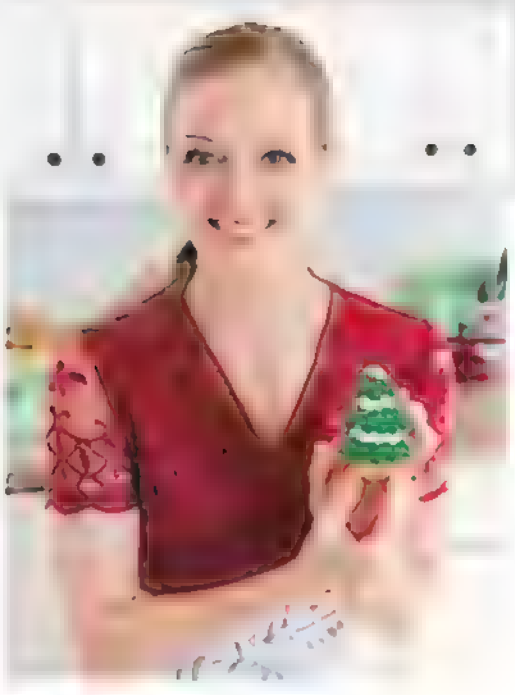
BITTERSWEET ORANGE COOKIES WITH CAMPARI BUTTERCREAM

Makes 36 cookies
(photo on page 28)

This is a cookie that celebrates all that is delicious in a Negroni. Lots of bittersweet citrus notes come from the combination of grapefruit, orange, and lime, with a splash of orange blossom water added to the mix. Olive oil is used for half of the fat to infuse the cookie with some herbaceous notes; pick a delicious olive oil that you wouldn't mind drinking straight from the bottle. If you're lucky enough to come across actual bitter or Seville oranges, you can use the zest of two of those in place of the citrus listed.

- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **3 cups (600 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **3 tablespoons (18 grams) tightly packed grapefruit zest**
- **2 tablespoons (12 grams) tightly packed orange zest**
- **1½ tablespoons (9 grams) tightly packed lime zest**
- **¾ cup (168 grams) olive oil**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **1½ teaspoons (6 grams) orange blossom water**
- **1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup (127 grams) bread flour**
- **1¼ teaspoons (3 grams) sea salt, divided**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda**
- **4 large egg whites (120 grams)**
- **1 cup (227 grams) slightly chilled unsalted butter, cubed**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) Campari**

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line several baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat softened butter, 1¾ cups (350 grams) sugar, and zests at medium speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Reduce mixer speed to low; add oil in a slow, steady stream, beating until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Add orange blossom water, and beat for 1 minute.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flours, 1 teaspoon (3 grams) salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed for several seconds. Using a silicone spatula, stir until completely combined, stopping to scrape bottom of bowl. (Dough will be on the wet side.) Cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to 4 days.
4. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and roll into balls. Freeze for 10 minutes.
5. In a small shallow bowl, place ½ cup (100 grams) sugar. Roll dough balls in sugar, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans.
6. Bake in batches until edges are set and centers are puffed, about 9 minutes. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
7. In the heatproof bowl of a stand mixer, combine egg whites, remaining ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking constantly, until mixture is thick and opaque and no longer feels gritty when rubbed between 2 fingers and an instant-read thermometer registers 160°F (71°C), about 10 minutes.
8. Return bowl to stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, beat at high speed until stiff peaks form and meringue and bowl are cool to the touch, about 15 minutes.
9. Switch to the paddle attachment. With mixer on medium speed, add chilled butter, one cube at a time, beating until combined after each addition. (If mixture curdles, your butter may be too cold. If mixture is soupy, you may need to refrigerate your buttercream.) Beat until smooth, glossy, and voluminous, about 2 minutes. Add Campari, beating until combined.
10. Place buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a star piping tip (Ateco #843). Holding tip perpendicular to cookie, squeeze out a small bit of buttercream and then lift up tip. Repeat pattern across tops of all of cookies.



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The Hutch Oven

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY
JOHANNAH CHADWICK AND REESE TALBOT

STYLING BY
EMILY HUTCHINSON

EMILY HUTCHINSON

Emily started baking as a small child with her grandmother. As she grew into adulthood and became a mother, baking was put on the back burner temporarily. Then, in 2008, her daughter Jenny passed away from SIDS. She was beyond devastated. With no hope in sight, her friends invited her to church, her heart opened, and she started to bake again. This triumph in the kitchen brought her joy, and she had to share it with the world through step-by-step videos. Ten years later, her Instagram account has more than 100,000 followers, she has taught numerous classes, and she appears on national television to showcase her popular techniques. Emily published her first book, *Creative Cookie Decorating*, in 2019; her second book is coming in 2021.

Emily's
• MUST-BAKE •

"My Classic Sugar Cookies recipe has the perfect balance of sugar and butter for a delicious canvas for piping buttercream. One of my most beloved designs is my Poinsettia Cookies—simple to execute and gorgeous to look at. Adding two-toned petals makes it lifelike and adds a little extra zhuzh to your cookies."

CLASSIC SUGAR COOKIE PRO TIPS

Adding the salt in with the sugars helps the salt dissolve through the dough better in this recipe. Regular table salt can be used, but make sure to reduce it to ½ teaspoon (3 grams). If you can find salted sweet cream butter, I recommend using that and omitting salt completely because salted sweet cream butter has the perfect amount of salt for these cookies.

I like to add ¼ teaspoon (1 gram) almond extract to my Classic Sugar Cookies recipe sometimes to give the cookies a holiday flavor.

Nice and thick cookies balance out the sweetness of the buttercream, so don't roll out the dough thinner than ¼ inch.

Aluminum-free baking powder should be double-acting, which means it's activated in mixing stage and baking stage. Best to keep aluminum out if we can, so I get aluminum-free.

Frosted cookies can be frozen for up to 2 weeks. To freeze them, be gentle and treat them like frosted cupcakes until they crust over. When you pull them out of the freezer, be sure to allow the buttercream to crust back over.

If you cream your butter and sugars together too much, it can lead to slight cracks in the baked cookie; cream as instructed.

CLASSIC SUGAR COOKIES

Makes about 24 cookies (depending on size of cutters used and thickness of dough)

We can't have the holidays without a delicious, soft sugar cookie. I love the texture of a granulated sugar cookie but I love the taste of an all-confectioners' sugar cookie, so I married the sugars to make the ideal cookie. I have perfected this recipe over years and years of baking. My family and friends consider it to be the best sugar cookie recipe! Remember to read the recipe directions, Notes, and PRO TIPS before starting.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (60 grams) confectioners' sugar
- ¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
- 1 large egg (50 grams)
- 1½ teaspoons (6 grams) vanilla extract
- 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
- American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed for 30 seconds. Add sugars and salt, and beat at medium speed for 1 minute. With mixer on low speed, add egg and vanilla; beat for about 30 seconds.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour and baking powder. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until dough comes together and starts to pull away from sides of bowl, 1 to 2 minutes. (Mixture may seem dry at first, but it will come together.)

3. Turn out dough onto a sheet of plastic wrap, and shape into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

4. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

5. On a lightly floured surface, roll one-third of dough to ⅛- to ¼-inch thickness. (Keep remaining dough in refrigerator until ready to roll.) Using desired holiday cutters, cut dough, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans. (See Notes.) Using a pastry brush, brush off any excess flour. Reroll and cut scraps as needed, refrigerating dough if it becomes too soft.

6. Bake until puffed and center is matte, 6 to 8 minutes. Using a small offset spatula, quickly press edges of cookies back into shape, if necessary. Let cool on pans for 1 minute. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

7. Pipe or spread American Crusting Buttercream onto cooled cookies as desired. (Alternatively, freeze cooled cookies in an airtight container for 2 hours or overnight; let thaw at room temperature for 1 hour, and pipe or spread American Crusting Buttercream onto cookies as desired. [See Notes.])

Notes: *To help the flour stick to your work surface, gently press your dough on the clean surface before dusting the surface with flour. To roll your dough to an even thickness, roll slowly up and down and then to the sides. If you run your hand across the top of your rolled dough, you can feel any bumps or slightly raised areas.*

The dough can be refrigerated for 10 minutes after the cookies are cut out and placed on a baking sheet.

This recipe is meant to be frosted with American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45). If you are looking for a sweeter cookie that you can just add sprinkles to, add extra vanilla or almond extract to sweeten the dough.

I prefer to freeze the baked cookies overnight. It gives them added moisture to keep them soft.

GINGERBREAD CUTOUT COOKIES

Makes about 24 cookies (depending on size of cutters used and thickness of dough)

Is there anything better than the smell of gingerbread baking in the oven? It brings me right back to my childhood, baking in the kitchen with my grandma. These cookies are nice and thick and keep their shape very well. They are perfectly chewy, spiced and brown sugared to holiday deliciousness. The buttercream frosting adds a creamy sweetness you won't want to leave off, but if you're in a pinch, simply add cinnamon hard candies or sprinkles before baking.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
1 large egg (50 grams)
1½ teaspoons (6 grams) vanilla extract
¼ cup (85 grams) unsulphured molasses
3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground cinnamon
1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed for 30 seconds. Add sugars and salt, and beat at medium speed for 1 minute. With mixer on low speed, add egg and vanilla; beat for about 30 seconds. Beat in molasses just until combined.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cinnamon, baking powder, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until combined. (Dough will be slightly sticky.)
3. Turn out dough onto a sheet of plastic wrap, and shape into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
4. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
5. On a lightly floured surface, roll one-third of dough to ⅓- to ¼-inch thickness. (Keep remaining dough refrigerated until ready to roll.) Using desired holiday cutters, cut dough, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans. (See Notes.) Using a pastry brush, brush off any excess flour. Reroll and cut scraps as needed, refrigerating dough if it becomes too soft.
6. Bake until puffed and center is matte, 6 to 8 minutes. Using a small offset spatula, quickly press edges of cookies back into shape, if necessary. Let cool on pans for 1 minute. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
7. Pipe or spread American Crusting Buttercream onto cooled cookies as desired. (Alternatively, freeze cooled cookies in an airtight container for 2 hours or overnight; let thaw at room temperature for 1 hour, and pipe or spread American Crusting Buttercream onto cookies as desired. [See Notes.])

Notes: *To help the flour stick to your work surface, gently press your dough on the clean surface before dusting the surface with flour. To roll your dough to an even thickness, roll slowly up and down and then to the sides. If you run your hand across the top of your rolled dough, you can feel any bumps or slightly raised areas.*

Alternatively, this dough can be rolled out between sheets of parchment paper.

I prefer to freeze the baked cookies overnight. It gives them added moisture to keep them soft.

AMERICAN CRUSTING BUTTERCREAM

Makes about 5 cups

You can frost cookies with delicious, beautiful buttercream, and it won't get completely smashed when stacking—it's true! For this recipe, I cut the butter with vegetable shortening to form a crust. (They can still be smashed if a lot of pressure is applied.) The shortening helps give it a smoother texture, which is great for piping cookies. If you hate the idea of shortening in the buttercream, omit and double the amount of butter. They won't crust over quite as much—just enough to gently stack. It is a little sweet, but the confectioners' sugar makes a strong crust, which pairs nicely with not-too-sweet cookies. It's a perfect balance. Typically, for a buttercream recipe, you would mix until light and fluffy, but not with this recipe. You want the buttercream to be nice and smooth, so just mix for a minute or two.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup (184 grams) vegetable shortening, softened
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
9 cups (1,080 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
5 to 6 tablespoons (75 to 90 grams) 2% reduced-fat milk or heavy whipping cream

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, shortening, and salt at medium speed until well combined. Add vanilla, and beat at medium speed for 1 minute. Add confectioners' sugar, and place a kitchen towel over mixer, (bowl of stand mixer will be full); beat at at low speed, and gradually increase speed to medium speed, beating until thick and combined. (Do not overmix.) Add 5 tablespoons (75 grams) milk or cream, and beat at medium-high speed until smooth, about 1 minute; add up to remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) milk or cream, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, if too thick. (Do not overmix.) Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week, or freeze in an airtight container for up to 3 months.

BUTTERCREAM PRO TIPS

Overmixing causes the buttercream to become a bit grainy, with tiny air bubbles. You want a nice and smooth consistency. If you see any air bubbles, beat them out with a rubber spatula by smacking it back and forth against the side of your mixer bowl.

You can still add your food colorings after mixing; it will not ruin the buttercream. I like to add food coloring in small batches, so I mix 1 to 2 cups at a time. Find what works best for you.

You can use all butter instead of half butter/half shortening and it will still form a crust, but the shortening gives it a smoother texture. If you use a vegetable shortening, I recommend Crisco. Make sure it's fresh and hasn't been sitting in the back of your cupboard; it gets rancid over time and develops a greasy, yucky taste. Fresh is best.

The weather is a huge factor. When it's hot out, you might need a tablespoon less of milk or cream; when it's cold, you may need an extra tablespoon. The temperature of your house and the humidity where you live will determine how much milk or cream to add. Start out with the minimum and slowly add to find out what works best for you. If you find it's too soft, add in ¼ cup (30 grams) confectioners' sugar to thicken it up. Be careful, though—it will begin to taste like straight confectioners' sugar if you add too much. After you make this once, you will find how much milk or cream works with your climate.

After piping your buttercream, let cookies stand for 8 to 12 hours to dry the crust before stacking; 24 hours makes the crust stronger. It won't be like royal icing—it can still get smashed.

Store frosted cookies in an airtight container at room temperature. You can freeze frosted cookies for up to 2 weeks, but I don't recommend more freezing time than that because it will change the texture of the buttercream.

Refrigerate unused buttercream in an airtight container. Let buttercream come to room temperature before using. It will be solid. I don't recommend freezing the buttercream itself—make a day or two before you need to frost the cookies—but if you have extra, you can freeze it in an airtight container for up to 3 months.

One batch of buttercream will frost 24 cookies for the completed set.

COLORING BUTTERCREAM

I mix my colors 1 cup at a time. The colors listed in each set of instructions will go together throughout the cookie set. The measurements of how much buttercream you will need are only if you are making 12 of the same cookie. The couplers and tips will also go through the whole set. You'll only need to follow what's listed if you're making a lot of that one cookie. If you are making the complete cookie set, the white will be used throughout and so will the gray, brown, red, and so on. The tips and couplers as well.

For red, use Wilton Red No-Taste Icing Color with Wilton Color Right Performance Food Coloring in Crimson/C. You may need ½ to 1 teaspoon Red No-Taste and 10 to 15 drops of the Color Right in Crimson/C per 1 cup buttercream. If you cover the bowl of red buttercream with plastic wrap and let stand overnight, the color will deepen. **For white**, use 1 teaspoon Wilton White-White Icing Color per 1 cup buttercream. **For dark green**, use ¼ to ½ teaspoon Wilton Gel Food Coloring in Kelly Green and 3 to 4 drops of AmeriColor Soft Gel Paste Food Color in Forest Green per 1 cup buttercream. **For light green**, use a very small amount of Wilton Gel Food Coloring in Kelly Green, 1 drop per 1 cup buttercream. **For gray**, I use 1 drop of black gel food coloring (any brand) per 1 cup buttercream. **For brown**, use ½ teaspoon brown gel food coloring (any brand) per 1 cup buttercream.

TWO-TONED BUTTERCREAM

Red-and-white poinsettia petals are beyond gorgeous. You can stick to beautiful deep red, or you can really impress people and use this technique. I love two-toned buttercream for my flowers. It gives them a unique and realistic look. One of the things I love about this method is that the extra layer of plastic wrap keeps the buttercream from warming up in your hand so quickly. The large tips don't require couplers.

YOU WILL NEED:

Red American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)
White American Crusting Buttercream
3 pastry bags, divided
2 couplers
Clear plastic wrap
Wilton No. 366 piping tip

TWO-TONED BUTTERCREAM PRO TIPS

As you are piping, you will see where the color is going. You can adjust the tip to make it flow from the center or the sides. I always give the buttercream a big squeeze before I start in order to make sure my color is flowing right. You will want the thin white strip to come through the center of the tip, where the point of the "beak" is.

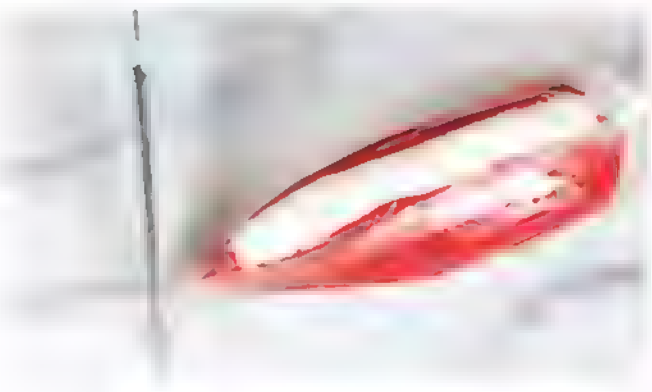
Don't overfill your pastry bag with buttercream. It warms up quickly in your hand and the flowers can get droopy. It's easier to pipe and guide your hand with less in your bag. Keep refilling for the best results. Fill the bag with ¾ to 1 cup buttercream.

I find it helpful to mix the different colors of buttercream in small batches at a time. Mix 1 cup buttercream to desired shade. Use gel food coloring because its more vibrant.

STEP 1: Place red American Crusting Buttercream and white American Crusting Buttercream in separate pastry bags fitted with couplers.

STEP 2: Place an 18-inch-long sheet of plastic wrap horizontally, and without attaching a piping tip to the coupler, pipe several 6-inch-long lines of red American Crusting Buttercream. Continue to layer lines, piping lines on top of each other, so you create about a 2-inch-high mound in the middle. (It will be thick; we are using about 1 cup buttercream total.)

STEP 3: Pipe a 6-inch-long strip (½ inch thick and ⅛ inch high) of white buttercream in the middle of the red buttercream mound.



STEP 4: Grab the bottom edge of the plastic wrap, and fold up and over horizontally to the top edge of the plastic wrap. Twist the ends of the plastic wrap. Coil one end so the buttercream doesn't come out of the top when squeezing. Cut the other end about 2 inches from the buttercream.

STEP 5: Place the plastic wrap-encased buttercream, cut end down, in a pastry bag fitted with a Wilton No. 366 piping tip. The piping tip should be perfectly centered over the white icing.

STEP 6: Start squeezing from the top to see where the white will come out. You can gently move the tip to manipulate where the white will come through in the petals. Begin to pipe. Move tip accordingly if needed without removing the plastic wrap-encased buttercream from the pastry bag.

POINSETTIA COOKIES

This cookie is one of my most popular and original designs. You can add this to a cake or cupcakes as well. I like making them red, white, pink, and two-toned. They are so beautiful and simpler than you'd think. Follow the instructions in Two-Toned Buttercream (page 46) on how to fill the pastry bag. I recently found out from an expert that the petals of the poinsettia aren't even the petals. The red, white, and pink/white petals are actually leaves; the flower is the center clusters. I found that very interesting and I find it funny that I still call the leaves "petals" while instructing you. We will be using two different sizes of leaf tips.

YOU WILL NEED:

Two-Toned Buttercream (instructions on page 46)
6 to 8 (2½- to 3-inch) round cookies
Gold sugar pearls
½ cup green American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)
Pastry bag
1 coupler
Wilton No. 352 piping tip
Wilton No. 366 piping tip

STEP 1: Follow instructions for Two-Toned Buttercream on page 46.

STEP 2: Have the beak (pointed end) of your piping tip facing down. Holding your pastry bag of Two-Toned Buttercream at a 45-degree angle in the center of a cookie, gently squeeze the pastry bag (you will see the buttercream billow out the sides), and slowly move toward the outer edge—but not all the way to the edge, because you want to be able to turn the cookie without accidentally touching the buttercream. Stop squeezing, and pull away to form the petal. (The pressure will get lighter as the petals come to a point.)

STEP 3: Repeat procedure all the way around the cookie, creating a base of 6 petals and leaving a little room for the center petals.

STEP 4: Using the same technique as in step 2, pipe a smaller petal on top of the base petals, making sure not to pipe a small petal directly on top of a base petal.

STEP 5: Repeat procedure all the way around the center, creating 5 center petals.

STEP 6: Place the gold sugar pearls in the center of the petals.

STEP 7: Place green American Crusting Buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a coupler and Wilton No. 352 piping tip. Using the same technique as in step 2, pipe leaves between base petals.

STEP 8: Turn your cookie as you go. That's why we don't want the petals to be longer than the cookie—they would get smudged.

STEP 9: Repeat procedure all the way around the cookie, creating 6 leaves.

STEP 10: Repeat procedure with remaining cookies.

SNOW GLOBE COOKIES

What's more fun than shaking up a snow globe? Eating a snow globe cookie! My childhood memories around the holidays always included shaking up beautiful, glittery snow globes. I've brought that same magic and sparkle to these beautifully decorated cookies. It does require some extra steps and technique, but with practice, I'm confident you will be very happy with how they turn out.

YOU WILL NEED:

1 cup white American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)
¼ cup brown American Crusting Buttercream
¼ cup gray American Crusting Buttercream
¼ cup red American Crusting Buttercream
¼ cup green American Crusting Buttercream
5 pastry bags
5 couplers
Parchment paper
Small offset spatula
1 (3-inch-wide) snow globe cookie cutter
4 (3-inch-wide) snow globe-shaped cookies
Baking sheet
Wilton No. 5 piping tip
Wilton No. 2 piping tip
Wilton No. 10 piping tip
Wilton No. 363 piping tip
Clear sugar crystals
White nonpareils

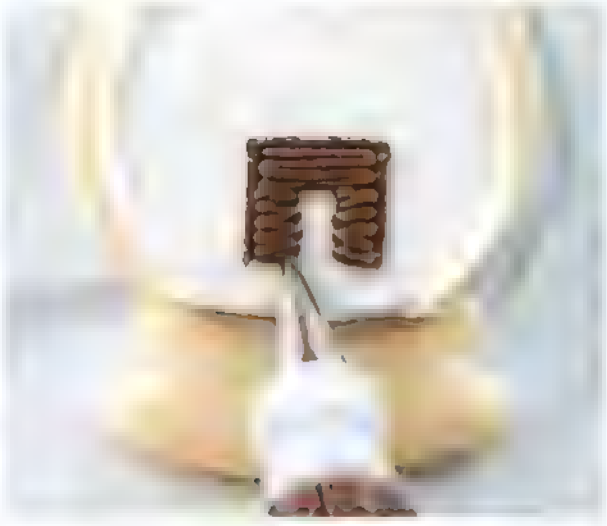
STEP 1: Place white, brown, gray, red, and green American Crusting Buttercream in separate pastry bags fitted with couplers.

STEP 2: Cut small pieces of parchment paper about 2 inches bigger than the snow globe cookies. Using a small offset spatula, spread white American Crusting Buttercream evenly on the parchment in a circle that's slightly bigger than the globe circle on the cookie. Make sure to get it nice and smooth. Place on a baking sheet, and freeze for at least 20 minutes. Using the snow globe cookie cutter, cut the circle for the globe. (Work very quickly so the buttercream doesn't thaw.)

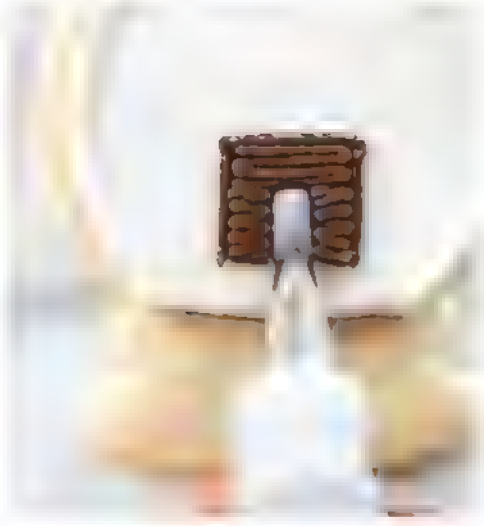
STEP 3: Immediately place the cut circle of buttercream on the globe part of a cookie.

STEP 4: Using the offset spatula, gently smooth out any imperfections.

STEP 5: Fit the white buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 5 piping tip, and pipe a border around the edge of the globe.

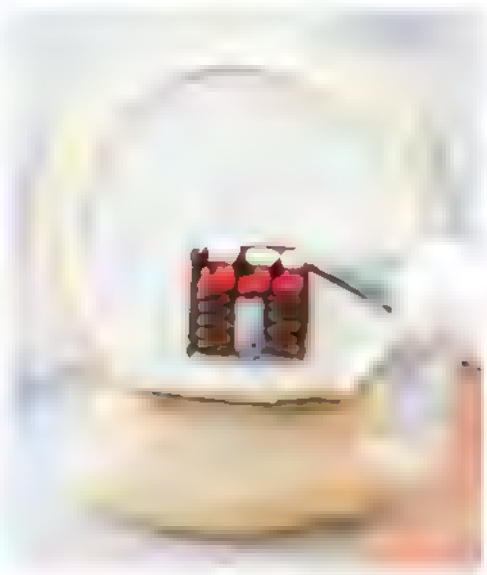


STEP 6: Fit the brown buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 2 piping tip, and pipe the fireplace border (top section and sides); pipe back and forth within the border, leaving center open, to complete the fireplace.



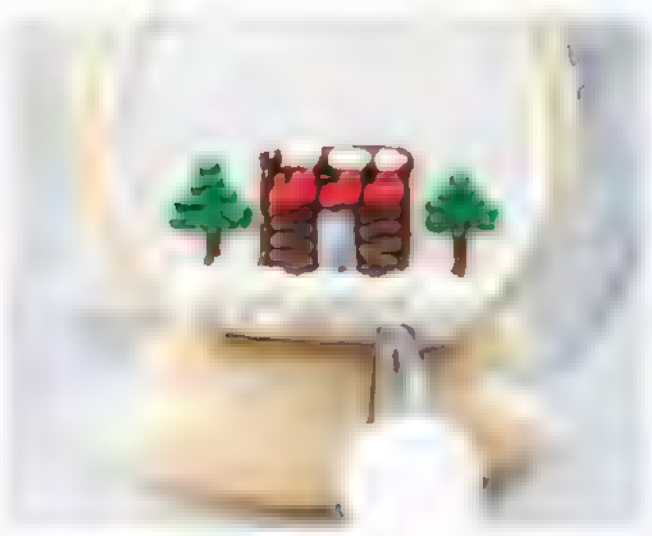
STEP 7: Fit the gray buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 10 piping tip, and pipe straight down the center of the fireplace to fill.

STEP 8: Fit the red buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 5 piping tip, and pipe little stockings at the top of the fireplace, leaving a small space above each stocking.



STEP 9: Fit the white buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 5 piping tip, and pipe a straight line across the top of each stocking for the fur lining of the stockings.

STEP 10: Turn the cookie so the globe is on the bottom. Fit the brown buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 2 piping tip, and pipe a small line for a tree stump on both sides of the fireplace. Fit the green buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 2 piping tip, and pipe horizontally back and forth to create an upside-down triangle for the tree shape.



STEP 11: Turn the cookie right side up. Fit the white buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 363 piping tip, and pipe the snow on the bottom of the globe in an up-and-down, playful motion to resemble fluffy snow.

STEP 12: Fit the gray buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 10 piping tip. Slightly angle the bag toward you, with the tip about ¼ inch above the cookie. Starting just beneath the "snow," pipe horizontally back and forth all the way down the base, leaving a small border around edges.

STEP 13: To sparkle up the globe, add sugar crystals and nonpareils to the snow and the base. Repeat procedure with remaining cookies.

PRO TIPS

Change the design inside the snow globe to only trees or add a snowman.

Dip the offset spatula in very hot water for 1 minute, quickly dry with a towel, and then smooth the buttercream base of the globe; repeat until desired smoothness is achieved.

HOLIDAY STOCKING COOKIES

Every year, one of my family's favorite traditions is hanging our stockings over the fireplace. These darling cookies match the stockings hanging in the snow globes in this cookie set. I love the vibrant red, but you can switch up the colors to make them your own. I played with colors in this set and added some gray and white. It looks lovely in any color.

YOU WILL NEED:

1 cup red American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)
1 cup white American Crusting Buttercream
2 pastry bags
2 couplers
Wilton No. 5 piping tip
Wilton No. 363 piping tip
6 to 8 (3-inch-wide) holiday stocking-shaped cookies
White confetti sprinkles, white nonpareils, and holly sprinkles (optional)

STEP 1: Place red and white American Crusting Buttercream in separate pastry bags fitted with couplers.

STEP 2: Fit the red buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 5 piping tip, and pipe a border on the outside of the bottom of a cookie, leaving a small border around edges. (Don't pipe where the "fur" will go.)

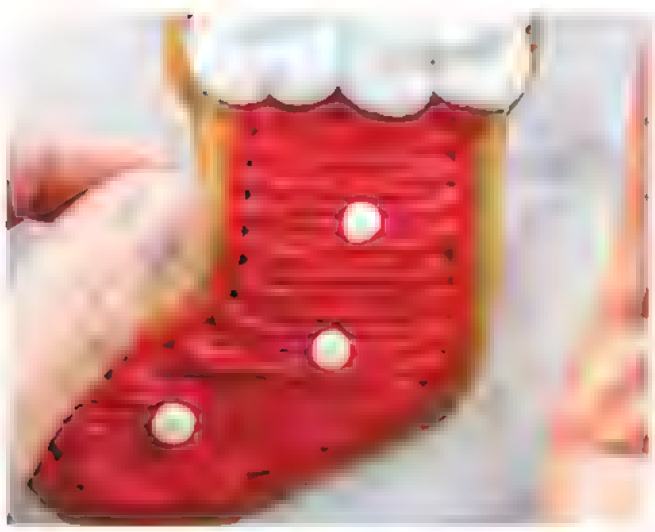
STEP 3: Pipe just under the "fur" to close outline.

STEP 4: Holding the pastry bag at a slight angle, pipe back and forth horizontally, applying even pressure.

STEP 5: Pipe until you reach the end of the stocking.

STEP 6: Turn the cookie so the bare portion is closest to you. Fit the white buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 363 piping tip. Holding the bag at a 45-degree angle, pipe up and down and around, squeezing the bag so the buttercream billows out and the fur looks fluffy.

STEP 7: Complete the fur, trying to make it look fluffy by going up, down, and around. The stronger the flow, the fluffier it will be.



STEP 8: Place 3 white confetti sprinkles randomly on the stocking. (I like to use odd numbers when I decorate with sprinkles if I'm specifically placing them.)

STEP 9: Randomly sprinkle nonpareils on the stocking to make it special.

STEP 10: If you have any cute holiday sprinkles, add them to the white fur. I love how the holly sprinkles look. Repeat procedure with remaining cookies.

WINTER TREE COOKIES

For the trees in this cookie collection, I decided to pipe them shell (or teardrop) style because it adds some fun, elegance, and whimsy to the decorated trees. Having a white Christmas is completely magical. Let's bring that to life through this cookie.

YOU WILL NEED:

- 1¼ cups green American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)
- ¼ cup brown American Crusting Buttercream
- ¼ cup white American Crusting Buttercream
- 3 pastry bags
- 3 couplers
- 6 (3½-inch-long) tree-shaped cookies
- Wilton No. 21 piping tip
- Wilton No. 5 piping tip
- Wilton No. 2 piping tip
- White nonpareils (optional)

STEP 1: Place green, brown, and white American Crusting Buttercream in separate pastry bags fitted with couplers.

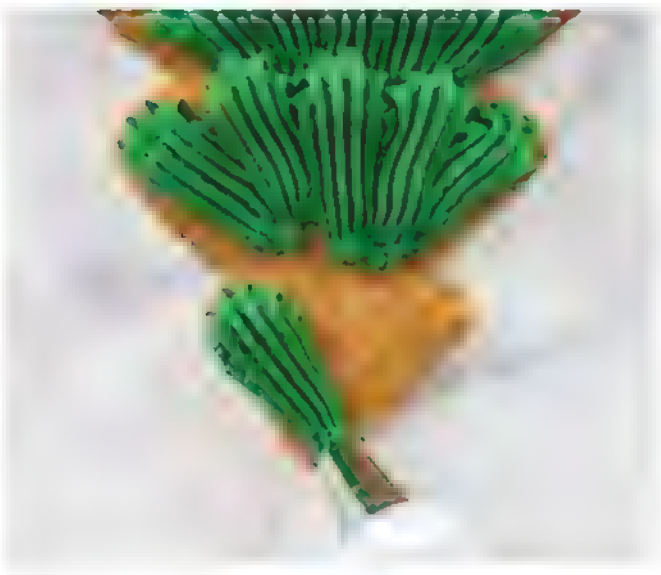
STEP 2: Turn a cookie so the top of the tree points toward you. Fit the green buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 21 piping tip. Holding the bag at a 45-degree angle, with the piping tip about ¼ inch above the cookie, start squeezing the bag hard to allow the buttercream to billow or fan out so it forces the tip up; lower pressure as you pull toward you to create the first shell.

STEP 3: Pipe the sides of the cookie first and work your way in.

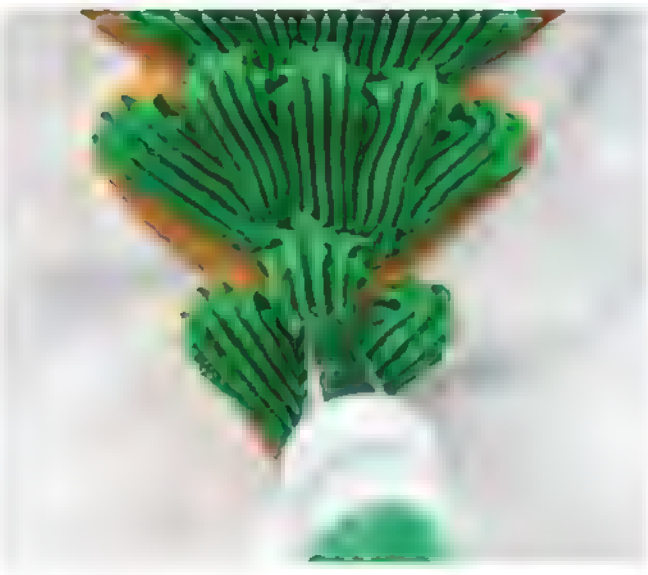
STEP 4: The fifth shell will be in the center of the first layer of branches.

STEP 5: Repeat steps 3 and 4 for the second layer of branches but slightly overlap to create dimension in the tree.

STEP 6: This layer will be a little tighter, but there will still be 5 shells.



STEP 7: For the third and final layer of shell branches, pipe sides and make them smaller.



STEP 8: The third shell will be the middle; elongate it to reach the second layer.

STEP 9: Turn the cookie right side up. Fit the brown buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 2 piping tip, and pipe back and forth horizontally at the base to create the trunk.

STEP 10: Fit the white buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 5 piping tip, and pipe up and down just under the top layer of branches to create snow in the center of the tree.

STEP 11: Pipe white buttercream up and down on the tip of the tree.

STEP 12: Pipe white buttercream up and down just under the middle layer of branches.

STEP 13:
Add sugar crystals or white nonpareils (if using) to fancy up the tree. Repeat procedure with remaining cookies.

TWINKLING TREE COOKIES

I created this tree for a beautiful pink vintage cookie set and fell in love with this style. I changed up the color of the tree but stuck to the red, pink, and white sprinkles because I love the little pops of color here and there. The sprinkles really draw your eyes in, making you fall in love with this cookie. The shell piping technique is fairly simple and so versatile. I enjoy seeing it bunched together to create a fabulous tree.

YOU WILL NEED:

1¼ cups light green American Crusting Buttercream (recipe on page 45)
¼ cup brown American Crusting Buttercream
2 pastry bags
2 couplers
6 (3½-inch-long) tree-shaped cookies
Wilton No. 199 piping tip
Wilton No. 2 piping tip
White confetti sprinkles, colored sugar pearls, and white nonpareils

STEP 1: Place light green and brown American Crusting Buttercream in separate pastry bags fitted with couplers.

PRO TIP
Add just a drop of green gel food coloring to make the light green. You can make the trees any color to fit a different theme.

STEP 2: Turn a cookie so the top of the tree points toward you. Fit the light green buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 199 piping tip. Holding the bag at a 45-degree angle, with the piping tip about ¼ inch above the cookie, start squeezing the bag hard to allow the buttercream to billow out so it forces the tip up; lower pressure as you pull toward you to create the first shell.

STEP 3: Pipe the very ends and work your way in.

STEP 4: The fifth branch will complete the first layer of branches.

STEP 5: Repeat steps 3 and 4 for the second layer of branches but slightly overlap so no bare cookie shows in between branch layers.

STEP 6: The last layer will be smaller and tight, with 3 shells.

STEP 7: Turn the cookie right side up. Fit the brown buttercream pastry bag with a Wilton No. 2 piping tip. Holding the bag at a slight angle, pipe back and forth horizontally, applying steady pressure.

STEP 8: Place white confetti sprinkles and colored sugar pearls, one at a time, on buttercream. Make sure to place them all around the cookie.

STEP 9: Sprinkle white nonpareils all over cookie.

STEP 10: Repeat procedure with remaining cookies. Change the sugar pearls to fit any theme you're working with.

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Peanut Butter
Cookies
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PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY
MIKE JOHNSON

MIKE JOHNSON

Mike Johnson is a New York City-based recipe developer and food photographer who runs the popular baking and sweets blog *Mike Bakes NYC*, where he shares his indulgent dessert recipes. Mike's blog started as a creative outlet while he was in law school, combining his love of photography with his insatiable sweet tooth. Now, he's a licensed attorney who's left the practice of law to make his dream of working in the food industry full-time come true. Mike's first cookbook, *Even Better Brownies*, comes out December 1.

Chocolate Chai-Spiced
Crumble Bars
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STRAWBERRY CARDAMOM LINZER COOKIES

Makes about 24 sandwich cookies

Linzers are popular Austrian cookies often made during the holiday season. The cardamom in this cookie dough makes for a deliciously warm taste that pairs exceedingly well with the strawberry jam. You can take these cookies to the next level by using a homemade jam.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1½ cups (180 grams) confectioners' sugar
1 large egg (50 grams)
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cardamom
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
2½ cups (313 grams) all-purpose flour
1 cup (96 grams) almond flour
½ cup (160 grams) strawberry preserves
Garnish: confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and confectioners' sugar at medium speed until pale and fluffy, about 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg, cardamom, vanilla bean paste, salt, and cinnamon.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flours. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined. Using lightly floured hands, divide dough in half. Shape each half into a ½-inch-thick disk, and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. On a lightly floured surface, roll half of dough into a ¼-inch-thick circle. (If dough becomes too soft, rewrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until firm again.) Using a 2-inch fluted round cutter, cut dough, and place about 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Using desired 1-inch holiday cutter, cut centers from half of cookies. Reserve centers, and reroll with scraps once.
5. Bake until edges are lightly golden, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Repeat procedure with remaining dough.
6. Spread about 1 teaspoon (7 grams) preserves onto flat side of solid cookies. Garnish cookies with cutouts with confectioners' sugar, if desired. Place cookies with cutouts, flat side down, on top of preserves. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Mike's
MUST-BAKE
"My favorite recipe is definitely the Peppermint Patty Brownies. The chocolate and peppermint combination just can't be beat, in my opinion. And the overall texture of the brownie is perfect. It's slightly fudgy, and the dark chocolate and peppermint layers just melt in your mouth."

PEPPERMINT PATTY BROWNIES

Makes 16 brownies

This Peppermint Patty Brownies recipe is perfect for the chocolate-peppermint lovers in your life. These brownies should be refrigerated but can be enjoyed chilled or at room temperature.

1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour
⅓ cup (25 grams) unsweetened natural or Dutch process cocoa powder
¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking powder
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted
2 large eggs (100 grams)
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
Peppermint Filling (recipe follows)
Chocolate Topping (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray an 8-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together melted butter, eggs, and vanilla until well combined. Add butter mixture to sugar mixture, stirring just until combined. Pour batter into prepared pan, spreading into an even layer.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few moist crumbs, 30 to 33 minutes. Let cool completely in pan.
5. Top cooled brownie layer with Peppermint Filling; using a damp offset spatula, smooth Peppermint Filling into an even layer. Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes.
6. Top Peppermint Filling with Chocolate Topping. Slam pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter to release any air bubbles. Refrigerate until topping is set, about 2 hours.
7. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Serve chilled or at room temperature. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Peppermint Filling

Makes about 1 cup

2½ cups (300 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
1 tablespoon (14 grams) unsalted butter, softened
½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract
¼ teaspoon (1.5 grams) vanilla bean paste
2 to 4 tablespoons (30 to 60 grams) boiling water

1. In a medium bowl, place confectioners' sugar, butter, peppermint extract, and vanilla bean paste. Add 2 tablespoons (30 grams) boiling water, and stir until combined. (It should resemble a thick paste). Add up to remaining 2 tablespoons (30 grams) boiling water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, if needed. Use immediately.

Chocolate Topping

Makes about ¾ cup

3.5 ounces (100 grams) 70% cacao dark chocolate, chopped
¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter

1. In the top of a double boiler, combine chocolate and butter. Cook over simmering water, stirring frequently, until melted and smooth. Use immediately.

BROWNED BUTTER SUGAR COOKIES

Makes about 24 cookies

Infused with the rich, nutty flavor of browned butter and rolled in festive nonpareils, these Browned Butter Sugar Cookies are the perfect treat for the holidays.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, cubed
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
- 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- Garnish: holiday nonpareils

1. In a light-colored medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook, stirring constantly, until butter turns a medium-brown color and has a nutty aroma, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat, and pour into the bowl of a stand mixer. Let cool slightly, about 5 minutes.

2. Add sugars to browned butter. Using the paddle attachment, beat at medium-high speed until combined, about 1 minute. With mixer on low speed, beat in egg, egg yolk, and vanilla bean paste.

3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture; slowly increase mixer speed to high, beating until well combined. (Dough will be thick and a little greasy.)

4. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

5. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 30 grams each), and roll into balls. Roll in nonpareils, if desired, and place on prepared pan. Loosely cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 45 minutes.

6. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

7. Place dough balls 3 inches apart on prepared pans.

8. Bake in batches until lightly browned on edges, 12 to 13 minutes. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

PEANUT BUTTER-CHAI MACARONS

Makes about 32 macarons

These macarons are filled with a delicious, lightly spiced Peanut Butter-Chai Buttercream, perfect for enjoying with a cup of tea!

4 large egg whites (120 grams), room temperature
½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
5 drops brown gel food coloring (optional)
1⅔ cups (200 grams) confectioners' sugar
1⅓ cups (128 grams) almond flour
Peanut Butter-Chai Buttercream (recipe follows)
Garnish: granulated sugar

1. Line baking sheets with silicone baking mats or parchment paper. Using a pencil, draw 1½-inch circles 2 inches apart on parchment paper; turn parchment over. (If using silicone baking mats, place parchment templates underneath baking mats.)
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites at medium speed until foamy and whisk begins leaving visible trails. Gradually add granulated sugar; increase mixer speed to high, and beat until stiff peaks form. Beat in food coloring (if using). (Do not overwhip, or you risk drying out your egg whites.)
3. In a medium bowl, sift together confectioners' sugar and flour. Using a rubber spatula, fold confectioners' sugar mixture into egg white mixture from bottom of bowl upward; press flat side of spatula through middle and against side of bowl. (Batter will look very thick at first, but it will get thinner as you fold.) Fold until batter reaches a lavalike consistency. (See PRO TIP.)
4. Transfer batter to a large pastry bag fitted with a ⅜-inch round piping tip (Wilton No. 2A). Holding piping tip at a 90-degree angle to a prepared pan, pipe batter onto drawn circles of template underneath mat, or pipe batter onto drawn circles if using parchment. Lift pans 6 inches above counter, and drop to release any air bubbles; repeat 3 to 4 times. (If you don't release air bubbles, they will expand during baking and crack your macaron shells.) Garnish with granulated sugar, if desired. Let stand at room temperature until a skin develops, about 30 minutes. (You should be able to lightly touch a shell without batter getting stuck to your finger; on a humid day, it might take 1 hour or more.)
5. Preheat oven to 300°F (150°C).
6. Bake, one batch at a time, for 18 to 20 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let cool on pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. (If bottoms are a tiny bit sticky, let cool on pan for 10 to 15 minutes more. If, however, bottoms are already browned, they peel off cleanly, or they appear overbaked, immediately remove from pan to let cool completely on a wire rack.)

PRO TIP

The figure eight test is a great way to check your batter's consistency. Pick up the batter with your spatula, and let it flow down into the bowl while drawing the figure "8." If you can do that without the batter breaking, immediately stop folding.

7. Place Peanut Butter-Chai Buttercream in a pastry bag; cut a ¼-inch opening in tip. Pair each macaron shell with another of a similar size; pipe buttercream onto flat side of half of macaron shells. Place remaining macaron shells, flat side down, on top of buttercream, gently sandwiching them together. Refrigerate macarons in an airtight container for up to 5 days; let come to room temperature before serving.

Note: *Macarons are best enjoyed the next day, after they have matured in the refrigerator (since the flavors will be absorbed into the shell). If your shells are hard, crunchy, or overbaked, letting them mature will also cause the shells to absorb the moisture from the filling, softening them up and giving them their signature chewy texture. It's always better to overbake rather than underbake your macarons because the maturation process can typically salvage ones that are overbaked.*

Peanut Butter-Chai Buttercream

Makes about 1½ cups

1½ cups (180 grams) confectioners' sugar
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom
⅛ teaspoon ground allspice
Dash ground cloves
¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¼ cup (65 grams) creamy peanut butter
3 tablespoons (45 grams) heavy whipping cream

1. In a medium bowl, sift together confectioners' sugar, cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, allspice, and cloves.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat sugar mixture, butter, peanut butter, and cream at low speed for about 30 seconds; increase mixer speed to medium-high, and beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Use immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If refrigerating, let come to room temperature and rewhip before using.

PEPPERMINT MOCHA BROWNIES

Adapted from Even Better Brownies (*Page Street Publishing, 2020*)

Makes 24 bars

Peppermint Mocha Brownies are your favorite holiday drink in dessert form—as in brownies with a hint of coffee and peppermint flavors shining through each bite, all decked out with crushed bits of striped peppermint candies sprinkled on top. Because when it's the holidays, nothing screams "festive" quite like something sweet and totally, unapologetically over the top.

1 tablespoon (6 grams) espresso powder
1 tablespoon (15 grams) boiling water
1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
1 cup (85 grams) unsweetened natural or Dutch process cocoa powder
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, melted
4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
1 teaspoon (4 grams) peppermint extract
1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
Crushed peppermint candies (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan; spray parchment.
2. In a small bowl, stir together espresso powder and 1 tablespoon (15 grams) boiling water until a thick liquid or paste forms; set aside.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together sugars and cocoa. Add espresso mixture and melted butter, and whisk until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, whisking until combined after each addition. Stir in extracts. Using a rubber spatula or wooden spoon, fold in flour and salt just until combined. Spread batter in prepared pan.
4. Bake for 15 minutes. Sprinkle with candies (if using), and bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few moist crumbs, 10 to 15 minutes more. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Store in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

PRO TIP

To crush peppermint candies, place and seal candies in a resealable plastic bag. On a kitchen towel-lined counter, use a rolling pin to pound and crush candies inside of the bag until desired consistency is reached.

CHOCOLATE-COVERED PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES

Makes about 24 cookies

This easy peanut butter cookie recipe is perfect for holiday baking! It starts with a sweet, buttery peanut butter slice-and-bake cookie, which is then covered in peanut butter and then completely dipped in chocolate. Yum!

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
- 1¾ cups (448 grams) creamy peanut butter, divided
- 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water, plus more if needed
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 16 ounces (454 grams) 32% cacao milk chocolate, melted
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) canola oil
- 2 ounces (57 grams) 60% cacao semisweet chocolate, melted

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, brown sugar, and vanilla bean paste until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in ¾ cup (192 grams) peanut butter until combined. Add flour, 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water, and salt, and beat until combined and dough forms a ball. (If dough seems too crumbly, add water, 1 teaspoon [5 grams] at a time, until it comes together. Dough should not be overly sticky.)
2. Divide dough in half. Place each half on a large piece of plastic wrap. Using your hands, shape each half into an 6x2-inch rectangle. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or overnight. (Alternatively, shape each dough half into a 6-inch-long log, about 2 inches thick, to make round cookies.)
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Cut dough rectangle into ½-inch-thick slices, and place 1 inch apart on prepared pans. (Alternatively, cut dough log into ½-inch-thick slices, and place 1 inch apart on prepared pans.)
5. Bake until edges are golden brown, 13 to 15 minutes. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Spread remaining 1 cup (256 grams) peanut butter on top of cookies (about a heaping ½ tablespoon [8 grams] each), and place on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Freeze until set, about 20 minutes. (This makes coating in chocolate easier.)
7. Stir oil into melted milk chocolate. Place each cookie in melted milk chocolate; using a fork, lift cookies out of chocolate, and gently tap on side of bowl to remove excess. Return to pan. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 15 minutes. Drizzle with melted semisweet chocolate. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 15 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

CHOCOLATE CHAI-SPICED CRUMBLE BARS

Makes 18 bars
(photo on page 58)

Nothing ushers in the holidays more than spiced bakes. The creamy fudge filling of these bars pairs perfectly with the buttery spiced crust and topping, making them a perfect no-fuss holiday dessert.

- 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 (14-ounce) can (397 grams) sweetened condensed milk
- 12 ounces (340 grams) 70% cacao dark chocolate, chopped
- 1½ teaspoons (6 grams) vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan; spray parchment.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, ginger, cardamom, allspice, and pepper until combined. Stir in melted butter until a crumbly dough forms. Reserve 1½ cups (300 grams) dough. Press remaining dough evenly into bottom of prepared pan.
3. Bake until crust is raised and puffy, 10 to 12 minutes. Leave oven on.
4. In a medium saucepan, heat sweetened condensed milk and chocolate over low heat, stirring constantly, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Stir in vanilla. (Mixture will be thick.) Pour mixture onto crust, spreading with an offset spatula; sprinkle with reserved dough.
5. Bake until topping is light golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week, or freeze in an airtight container for up to 3 months.

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY
ERIN CLARKSON

ERIN CLARKSON

Erin is a baking blogger who moved from New Zealand to Brooklyn, New York, six years ago, and she started her blog as a way to combat homesickness by making classic New Zealand treats. Her blog covers a range of sweet and savory baking, with a focus on fresh, seasonal ingredients, reworked New Zealand classics, and breaking down complicated recipes into manageable projects.

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Linzer Cookies
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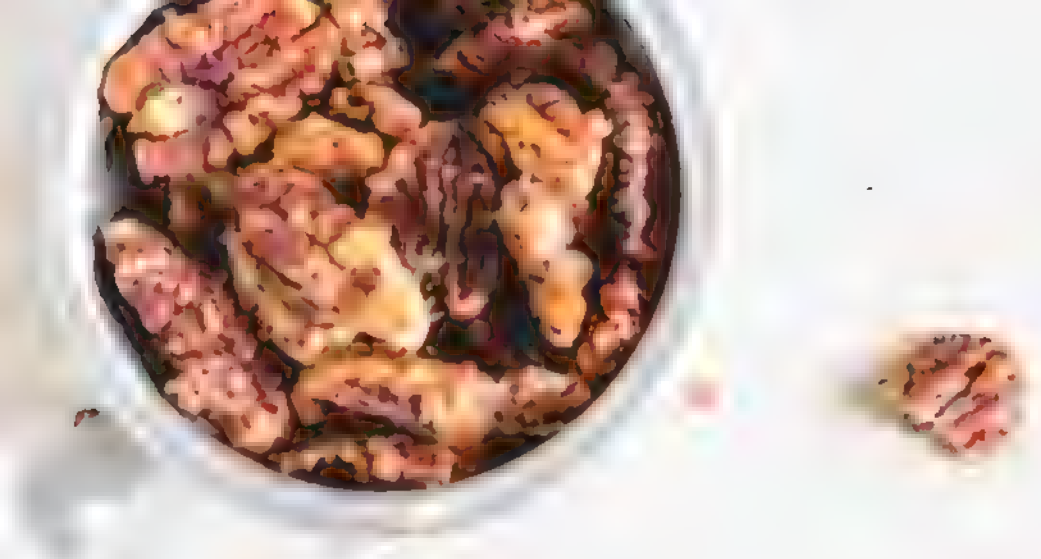


CANDIED PECAN AND DARK CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes about 20 cookies

These massive bakery-style cookies are a delicious twist on my classic chocolate chip cookies. They are loaded up with dark chocolate and have a delicious crunch and flavour from candied toasted pecans.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon (198 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (124 grams) granulated sugar
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
2⅓ cups plus 1 tablespoon (300 grams) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
10.5 ounces (300 grams) 70% cacao dark chocolate, roughly chopped
1 cup (150 grams) Candied Pecans (recipe follows)*, chopped
Flaked sea salt (optional)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg and vanilla bean paste, beating until combined.
2. In a medium bowl, sift together flour, kosher salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed just until combined and a few streaks of flour remain. Add chocolate and Candied Pecans, and beat at low speed until combined.
3. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
4. Using a ¼-cup spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 60 grams each), and roll into balls. Place on prepared pan. Lightly cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1 hour.
5. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 3 to 4 baking sheets with parchment paper.
6. On a prepared pan, arrange 6 dough balls. (Keep remaining dough balls refrigerated.)
7. Bake until golden brown and edges are set, 14 to 15 minutes. (If cookies have lost their round shape in oven, use a round cookie cutter slightly larger than cookie to nudge back into a circular shape.) Sprinkle with sea salt (if using). Let cool on pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Repeat procedure with remaining dough, baking one batch at a time. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

**Store-bought candied pecans can be substituted.*

Notes: *The dough for these cookies can be made ahead and baked straight from the freezer. To freeze, scoop the dough, and place on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; freeze until solid, and transfer to an airtight container. Add 1 to 2 minutes to the bake time if baking from frozen.*

To get big chocolate puddles on the tops of your cookies, chop up about 100 grams dark chocolate. Once you have scooped the dough into balls, flatten each ball and press a little of the extra chocolate onto the top and sides and then squish back into a ball. This gives you even distribution of the chocolate to create perfect puddles.

For best results, make this recipe by weight. The final texture of cookies can vary greatly depending on the amount of sugar and flour in the recipe, so it is important to ensure that the quantities are accurate.

Candied Pecans

Makes 1½ cups

¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
1 tablespoon (14 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
1 cup (142 grams) pecan halves, toasted

1. Line a small baking sheet with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine sugar, butter, and salt over medium heat. Add pecans, and cook, stirring frequently, until sugar is melted and nuts are evenly coated with sugar mixture, adjusting heat as needed. Pour mixture onto prepared pan; using a spatula, spread nuts out so they aren't clumped together. Let cool completely; break up any lumps. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

CRANBERRY SHORTCAKE BARS

Makes 16 bars

In New Zealand, "shortcake" refers to a slice (what we call a bar) that is made with two pieces of rolled-out sweet pastry and a fruit filling. Every grandmother in New Zealand has their own version. I have simplified my recipe a little here to save on time and work and, instead, pressed in half of the sweet pastry as the base and crumbled the rest on top. It is traditionally made with apple but is amazing with almost any fruit. Instead of apples, this version has a tangy whole cranberry filling, which works great with fresh or frozen fruit.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1¾ cups plus 2 tablespoons (374 grams) granulated sugar, divided
2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
1½ teaspoons (9 grams) vanilla bean paste, divided
3½ cups plus 2 tablespoons (454 grams) all-purpose flour
1¾ teaspoons (8.75 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt, divided
16 ounces (454 grams) fresh or frozen* cranberries
1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons (14 grams) tapioca starch
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon (20 grams) water or orange juice
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs and 1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste, beating until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, and ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until combined. Transfer 2 cups (475 grams) dough to prepared pan, and press evenly into bottom of pan, smoothing surface with an offset spatula. Set remaining dough aside.
4. In a medium bowl, stir together cranberries, tapioca starch, 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon (20 grams) water or orange juice, remaining 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (224 grams) granulated sugar, remaining ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) salt, and remaining ½ teaspoon (3 grams) vanilla bean paste with a spatula until well combined. Spoon cranberry mixture evenly onto dough in pan. (Do not press down too hard.) Crumble remaining dough in an even layer on top of cranberries.
5. Bake until topping is golden brown and filling is bubbly, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool completely in pan. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Store, loosely covered with a paper towel, at room temperature for up to 3 days.

**If using frozen cranberries, do not thaw them.*

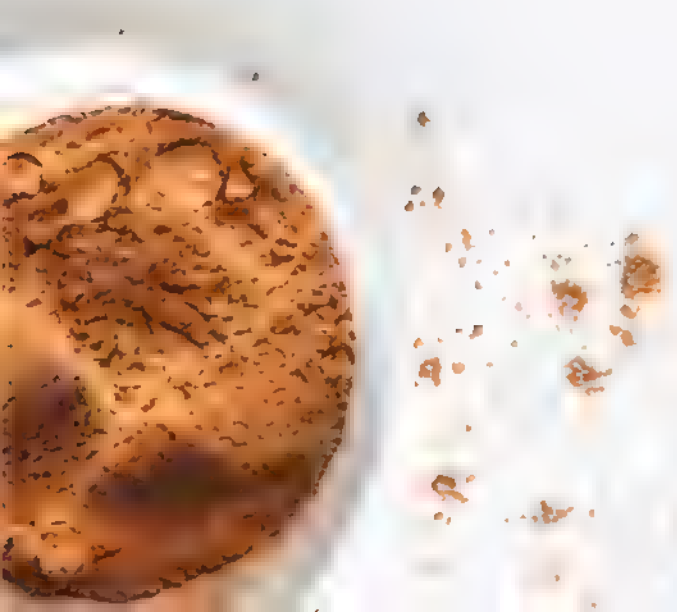
GINGER-MOLASSES SUGAR COOKIE SANDWICHES WITH SPICED CREAM CHEESE BUTTERCREAM

Makes 11 sandwich cookies

These are some of my favourite cookies. They are rich and gingery, with a depth of flavour from the molasses, and they are rolled in ginger sugar before being baked to give them a sparkly, gingery finish. I love these cookies as is, but they are also amazing sandwiched together with Spiced Cream Cheese Buttercream.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1¼ cups (250 grams) granulated sugar, divided
⅔ cup (147 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
2 tablespoons (42 grams) molasses
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
2¼ cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour, sifted
5 teaspoons (10 grams) ground ginger, divided
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cardamom
Spiced Cream Cheese Buttercream (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 4 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar, brown sugar, and molasses at high speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg and vanilla bean paste, and beat at low speed until combined. Add flour, 4 teaspoons (8 grams) ginger, salt, cinnamon, baking soda, and cardamom, and beat at low speed just until combined, stopping to scrape sides and bottom of bowl.
3. In a small bowl, stir together remaining ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar and remaining 1 teaspoon (2 grams) ginger.
4. Using a 2-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 40 grams each) six times. (Dough will be soft.) Roll each scoop into a ball; roll balls in ginger sugar, and place 3 inches apart on a prepared pan. (Keep remaining dough in bowl.)
5. Bake until centers are puffed and edges are set, 9 to 11 minutes. Let cool completely on pan. Repeat procedure with remaining dough, baking one batch at a time.



6. Place Spiced Cream Cheese Buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch French star piping tip (Ateco #865). Pipe buttercream onto flat side of half of cookies. Place remaining cookies, flat side down, on top of buttercream. Refrigerate filled cookies in an airtight container for up to 2 days. Store unfilled cookies in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

Spiced Cream Cheese Buttercream

Makes 1¾ cups

⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon (90 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup (169 grams) cold cream cheese
2¾ cups (330 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground ginger
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cardamom

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and cold cream cheese at high speed until pale and creamy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add confectioners' sugar, and beat at low speed until combined. Add ginger, cinnamon, vanilla bean paste, salt, and cardamom, and beat at low speed just until combined. Increase mixer speed to high, and beat until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Use immediately.

PRO TIP
If you are making these ahead of time, store the cookies and the frosting separately and assemble them on the day you are planning to serve.

BROWNED BUTTER, WHITE CHOCOLATE, AND MACADAMIA COOKIES

Makes about 24 cookies

White chocolate and macadamia is a favourite combination of mine—smooth white chocolate pairs perfectly with crunchy macadamia nuts. I added them into a browned butter cookie base, which is beautiful and toasty from the browned butter and muscovado sugar. I like using nuts that have already been roasted and salted, which adds a depth of flavour to the cookie.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature
- ¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed muscovado sugar*
- ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
- 2½ cups plus 2 tablespoons (330 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
- ¾ teaspoon (3.75 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- 7 ounces (198 grams) white chocolate, roughly chopped
- 1⅓ cups (150 grams) roughly chopped roasted salted macadamia nuts
- Flaked sea salt (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 4 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook, swirling pan frequently, until butter turns a medium-brown color and has a nutty aroma, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat, and transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer; let cool slightly.
3. Add sugars to browned butter. Using the paddle attachment, beat at medium speed until combined, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Beat in vanilla bean paste. Increase mixer speed to high, and beat until lightened in color and thickened, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. In a medium bowl, sift together flour, kosher salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed just until combined and a few streaks of flour remain. Beat in white chocolate and nuts until combined, about 10 seconds. Using a 2-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 45 grams each) six times; roll into balls, and place 3 inches apart on a prepared pan. Cover remaining dough with plastic wrap.
5. Bake until centers are puffed and edges are set, 11 to 12 minutes. (If cookies have lost their round shape in oven, use a round cookie cutter slightly larger than cookie to nudge back into a circular shape.) Sprinkle with sea salt (if using). Let cool on pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Repeat procedure with remaining dough, baking one batch at a time. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

**If you don't have muscovado sugar, the same amount of dark brown sugar can be used instead.*

PRO TIPS

Make the Caramel Shards before you start making the bars so the caramel has time to cool and set and is ready to sprinkle on top by the time you are finished making the dough for the bars.

Have everything ready to go for the Caramel Shards. There are a few seconds between a toasty caramel and a burnt sugar, so you want to be able to pour out the caramel as soon as it is ready.

SALTED CARAMEL SNICKERDOODLE BARS

Makes 16 bars

These snickerdoodle bars are a wee twist on the Salted Caramel Snickerdoodles I developed for the 2018 Holiday Cookies *issue. These bars are soft and chewy and sprinkled with cinnamon sugar and Caramel Shards before baking.*

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1¼ cups (250 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar, divided
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
2⅔ cups (333 grams) all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) cream of tartar
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
Caramel Shards (recipe follows)
Garnish: flaked sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and 1¼ cups (250 grams) sugar at high speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg and vanilla bean paste, and beat at medium speed until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, cream of tartar, and kosher salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed just until combined. (Dough will be thick.) Press dough into prepared pan, smoothing with an offset spatula.
4. In a small bowl, stir together cinnamon and remaining 2 tablespoons (24 grams) sugar. Sprinkle on top of dough. Sprinkle Caramel Shards on top of dough.
5. Bake until edges are slightly puffed, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool completely in pan. (Bars will set as they cool.) Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Garnish with sea salt, if desired. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Caramel Shards

Makes about 1 cup

½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar

1. Line an 18x13-inch rimmed baking sheet with a silicone baking mat.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat sugar over medium heat, whisking occasionally, until melted. (Sugar will clump as it heats, but keep whisking and it will soon smooth out.) Cook, without stirring, until amber in color and just beginning to smoke slightly. Immediately pour onto prepared pan; lift mat to carefully spread caramel across mat to get as thin a layer as possible. Let cool completely.
3. Peel caramel off mat. Using a knife, cut caramel into pieces. (Be careful—shards are sharp.) Use immediately.

Erins

• MUST-BAKE •

"The recipe that I am most excited about is definitely the Hundreds and Thousands Biscuits. They are so nostalgic and a total New Zealand classic. I love how easy they are to make, and buttery shortbread and crunchy royal icing is the perfect combination."

HUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS BISCUITS

Makes about 32 cookies

I have combined two of my favourite childhood biscuits (what we call cookies in New Zealand)—my great-grandmother's shortbread recipe and hundreds and thousands biscuits, which are vanilla cookies with pink icing and sprinkles. These were always fought over in the holiday cookie sampler box.

¾ cup plus 3 tablespoons (212 grams) unsalted butter, softened
⅔ cup (80 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
2½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (321 grams) all-purpose flour
Royal Icing (recipe follows)
Nonpareils

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, confectioners' sugar, vanilla bean paste, and salt at low speed; gradually increase mixer speed to high, beating until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add flour, and beat at low speed just until combined.
2. Turn out dough onto a piece of plastic wrap, and press out into a rough rectangle. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.
3. Let dough stand at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Cut 4 (18x13-inch) sheets of parchment paper.
5. Divide dough in half, and place each half between 2 prepared parchment sheets. Using a rolling pin, gently flatten dough. Roll each half into an 18x13-inch rectangle, about ¼-inch thickness. (Remove top parchment and smooth down again if you are getting wrinkles.) Transfer dough rectangles, still between parchment, to baking sheets, and freeze for 15 to 20 minutes.
6. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Line 3 to 4 baking sheets with parchment paper.
7. Using a 2½-inch fluted round cutter, cut dough, and place 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Reroll scraps, and freeze for 5 to 10 minutes; cut dough. (If dough starts to soften, freeze for about 5 minutes to firm up.) Freeze for 10 minutes.
8. Bake, one batch at a time, until set and starting to turn golden, 12 to 13 minutes. Let cool on pans for 15 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container until ready to ice.
9. Dip each cookie in Royal Icing. Let stand for 2 minutes; sprinkle with nonpareils. Let stand until icing is set, at least 1 hour. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

Notes: *Store dough you are not working with in the freezer until ready.*

You will have a little Royal Icing left over—you need enough to be able to comfortably dip the cookies in it to get a good coating. Cover Royal Icing with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of icing, and refrigerate in an airtight container.

The sprinkles will start to bleed after 1 day, so just keep this in mind when you are preparing cookies.

Royal Icing

Makes 1⅓ cups

2 teaspoons (10 grams) water
Pink gel food coloring (optional)
3⅓ cups (400 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 large pasteurized egg whites* (60 grams), room temperature

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together 2 teaspoons (10 grams) water and food coloring (if using). Add confectioners' sugar and egg whites, and stir until well combined. Use immediately, or cover with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of icing, and refrigerate until ready to use.

**Pasteurized egg whites have been gently heated to kill harmful bacteria without cooking the actual egg, reducing the risk of salmonella.*

Note: *Dissolving the food coloring in the water before you mix in the other ingredients helps the color disperse evenly.*

CHOCOLATE AND CHERRY LINZER COOKIES

Makes about 20 sandwich cookies
(photo on page 72)

Super chocolaty cookies get paired with a sweet cherry preserves filling for a classic chocolate-cherry flavour combination.

1 cup plus 1½ tablespoons (250 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon (100 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
2 cups plus 2½ tablespoons (270 grams) all-purpose flour
⅔ cup plus 1 tablespoon (55 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder
½ cup (160 grams) cherry preserves
Garnish: confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and salt at low speed; gradually increase mixer speed to high, beating until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour and cocoa. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until just combined.
3. Cut 2 (18x13-inch) sheets of parchment paper. Turn out dough onto a parchment sheet; flatten into a rough rectangle, and top with second parchment sheet, smoothing out any wrinkles. Roll out dough between parchment into an 18x13-inch rectangle, about ⅛-inch thickness. (Remove top parchment and smooth down again if you are getting wrinkles.) Transfer dough, still between parchment, to a baking sheet, and freeze until completely solid, 20 to 30 minutes.
4. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
5. Remove top sheet of parchment from dough. Using a 2½-inch fluted round cutter, cut dough, and carefully place 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Using a ¾-inch star-shaped cutter, cut centers from half of cookies. Reroll scraps, freeze, and cut dough. Repeat procedure until all dough is used. (If dough becomes difficult to work with or too soft, freeze for about 5 minutes to firm up.) Freeze until ready to bake.
6. Bake, one batch at a time, until set, 16 to 17 minutes. Let cool on pans for 15 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container until ready to use.
7. Spread or pipe 1 teaspoon (7 grams) preserves onto flat side of all solid cookies. Garnish cookies with cutouts with confectioners' sugar, if desired. Place cookies with cutouts, flat side down, on top of preserves. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

Notes: *The chocolate cookie isn't super sweet, so feel free to increase the amount of sugar a little if you like.*

These cookies can be made ahead and stored in an airtight container for up to 3 days. Fill cookies just before serving.

Cranberry
Cheesecake Cookies
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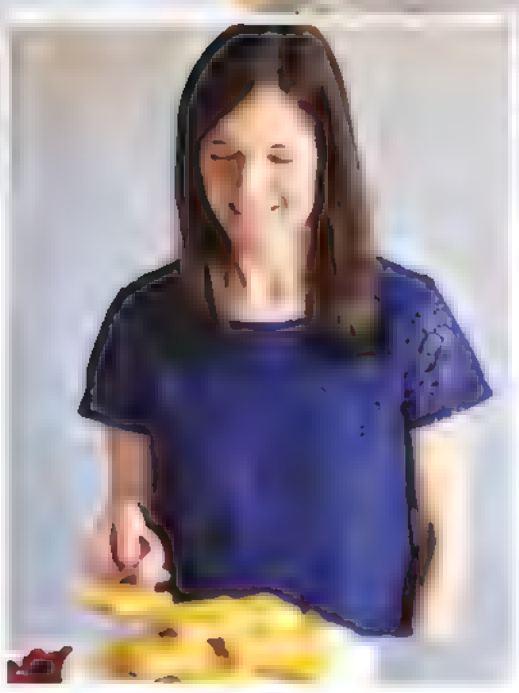

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY
LAURA KASAVAN

LAURA KASAVAN

Laura Kasavan is a food photographer, stylist, and recipe developer based in Northern California. A self-taught baker and a recipe developer for nearly a decade, Laura is passionate about crafting trusted and inspired recipes, one baked good at a time. Chocolate, Meyer lemons, and farmstand berries are among her favorite ingredients, and she's been known to put browned butter in everything. Laura has a journalism and digital marketing background and a strong love of chocolate, running, Italy, and photography.

Snickerdoodle Biscotti
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BROWNED BUTTER CHOCOLATE PISTACHIO COOKIES

Makes 24 cookies

Slice-and-bake browned butter pistachio shortbread cookies dipped in chocolate make the ideal cookie for shortbread lovers! Roasted salted pistachios add incredible flavor to these buttery cookies.

- **¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, cubed**
- **¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1½ teaspoons (6 grams) vanilla extract**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ cup (57 grams) plus 3 tablespoons (21 grams) finely chopped roasted salted pistachios, divided**
- **2 cups (340 grams) 46% cacao semisweet chocolate chips**

1. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook, swirling pan occasionally, until butter turns a medium-brown color and has a nutty aroma, about 5 minutes. Pour browned butter into a shallow glass bowl, and freeze until solidified and the texture of softened butter, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat browned butter and sugar at medium speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on medium-low speed, add vanilla and salt, beating until combined. Add flour, and beat at low speed until combined and dough starts to come together. Add ½ cup (57 grams) pistachios, beating just until combined.

3. Divide dough in half, and place each half on a piece of plastic wrap. (Dough will be crumbly but will come together as you press it together with your hands). Roll each half into a 6½-inch-long log, using plastic wrap to help shape soft dough. Wrap logs tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

4. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

5. Using a sharp knife, cut logs crosswise into ½-inch-thick rounds, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Using the bottom of a measuring cup, gently press rounds to make them perfectly level. (If dough rounds crack when flattening, simply press and smooth back together.) Refrigerate for 20 minutes.

6. Bake until golden, 16 to 20 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

7. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Transfer cooled cookies to prepared pans, and freeze for 20 minutes.

8. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, heat chocolate chips on high in 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth. Dip half of each cookie in melted chocolate, and return to pan. Using a spoon, drizzle melted chocolate onto dipped half of each cookie. Top cookies with remaining 3 tablespoons (21 grams) pistachios. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 20 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

PRO TIP

For uniformly round slice-and-bake cookies, split 2 empty paper towel rolls lengthwise down the middle. Refrigerate dough logs inside center of each cardboard roll until firm.

PEPPERMINT MOCHA COOKIES

Makes about 45 cookies

Chocolate cookies with a dash of espresso powder are dipped in chocolate and sprinkled with crushed peppermint to offer the richness of a warm peppermint mocha. These cookies balance the flavors of chocolate and coffee with refreshing peppermint. Enjoy these festive cookies by the fire!

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) instant espresso powder
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) peppermint extract, divided
- 2¾ cups (344 grams) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (43 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¾ teaspoon (3.75 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 16 ounces (454 grams) 60% cacao semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 6 ounces (180 grams) roughly crushed peppermint candies (about 30 candies)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until creamy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg, espresso powder, vanilla, and ½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract, beating until combined.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined and dough starts to come together in large pieces.

3. Divide dough in half, and place each half on a piece of plastic wrap. Shape each half into a disk, and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

4. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

5. On a lightly floured cutting board, roll half of dough to ¼-inch thickness. (Keep remaining dough in refrigerator.) Using a lightly floured 2-inch round cutter, cut dough, rerolling scraps once, and place on a prepared pan. Repeat procedure with remaining dough. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

6. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

7. Bake until tops and edges are set, 9 to 10 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

8. In the top of a double boiler, melt chocolate over simmering water until smooth and glossy. Stir in remaining ½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract. Dip tops of cooled cookies in melted chocolate. Place dipped cookies on parchment paper-lined pans, and sprinkle with candies. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 20 minutes. Refrigerate in a single layer in airtight containers for up to 5 days.

CHOCOLATE TOFFEE SHORTBREAD

Makes 12 cookies

Golden toffee shortbread cookies drizzled with dark chocolate are rich, buttery, and simply irresistible! Baked in a tart pan and sliced into wedges, these cookies are the perfect pairing of chocolate and toffee.

- ¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup (150 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (12 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1¾ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup (100 grams) plus 3 tablespoons (28 grams) toffee bits, divided
- 2 ounces (57 grams) 63% cacao dark chocolate chips
- Garnish: flaked sea salt

1. Spray a 9-inch fluted round removable-bottom tart pan with cooking spray.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar at medium speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on medium-low speed, add vanilla and kosher salt, beating until combined. Add flour, and beat at low speed until combined and dough starts to come together. Beat in ⅔ cup (100 grams) toffee bits just until combined. Transfer dough to prepared pan, pressing into bottom and up sides. Cover and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
4. Using a sharp knife, score dough into 12 wedges, and prick all over with a wooden skewer. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon (12 grams) sugar. Place pan on a rimmed baking sheet.
5. Bake until top is light golden and center is set, 28 to 32 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes. Using a sharp knife, cut into wedges. Let cool completely in pan.
6. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Place shortbread wedges in a single layer on prepared pan.
7. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat chocolate chips on high in 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth. Drizzle melted chocolate onto shortbread. Top with remaining 3 tablespoons (28 grams) toffee bits, and garnish with sea salt, if desired. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 20 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

MAKE AHEAD

Shortbread dough can be made up to 1 month in advance. After refrigerating dough for 1 hour, score dough into wedges, and prick all over with a wooden skewer. Wrap tart pan in foil, and place in a large resealable plastic bag to freeze. When you're ready to bake, you can bake the shortbread directly from the freezer, adding 2 to 3 minutes to the bake time.

FROSTED CITRUS COOKIES

Makes 24 cookies

Soft-batch citrus cookies topped with creamy swirls of Citrus Frosting make a zesty and bright addition to the holiday cookie table! Use any mix of in-season citrus you love in these cookies.

¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 tablespoons (6 grams) citrus zest*
¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar
¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
1 large egg (50 grams)
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
2⅓ cups (292 grams) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon (3 grams) cornstarch
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
Citrus Frosting (recipe follows)
Garnish: candied citrus peel

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and citrus zest at medium speed until smooth. Add sugars, and beat until fluffy, about 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg and vanilla until combined.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined. Cover and refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans.
5. Bake until golden and tops and edges are set, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Using an offset spatula, spread Citrus Frosting onto cooled cookies. Garnish with candied citrus peel, if desired. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

**I used a blend of orange, lemon, and lime zests.*

Citrus Frosting

Makes about 2 cups

¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon (3 grams) citrus zest
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
3 cups (360 grams) confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon (15 grams) heavy whipping cream

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and salt at medium speed until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in citrus zest and vanilla. Gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating at low speed until combined. Add cream; increase mixer speed to medium-high, and beat until light and airy, 1 to 2 minutes. Use immediately.

Lauras

• MUST-BAKE •

"My must-bake is the peppermint chocolate sandwich cookies! I love a holiday sandwich cookie, and these are the perfect dark chocolate crinkle cookie sandwiched with peppermint buttercream. Roll the edges in crushed peppermint candies for a festive touch!"

PEPPERMINT-CHOCOLATE SANDWICH COOKIES

Makes 12 sandwich cookies

Dark chocolate crinkle cookies sandwiched with peppermint buttercream are the ultimate cookie for chocolate-and-peppermint lovers! For an extra-festive touch of peppermint, garnish the cookies with crushed peppermint candies.

4 ounces (113 grams) unsweetened chocolate, chopped
¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, cubed
1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour
½ cup (43 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking soda
¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar, plus more for rolling
¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature
Confectioners' sugar, for rolling
Peppermint Frosting (recipe follows)
Garnish: roughly crushed round peppermint candies

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, combine chocolate and butter. Heat on high for 30 seconds; stir. Heat on high in 15-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth. Let cool slightly.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, salt, and baking soda.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together granulated sugar, brown sugar, and eggs until combined. Add cooled chocolate mixture, and whisk until smooth. Fold in flour mixture just until combined. (Mixture will resemble brownie batter.) Let dough stand at room temperature for 10 minutes.
5. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough. Roll in granulated sugar to coat; roll in confectioners' sugar to coat. Place dough balls 2 inches apart on prepared pans.
6. Bake until puffed and cracked and edges are set, 16 to 18 minutes. Tap pans on a kitchen towel-lined counter to slightly flatten cookies. Let cool on pans for 15 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
7. Pipe or spread Peppermint Frosting onto flat side of half of cooled cookies. Place remaining cookies, flat side down, on top of frosting. Garnish with candies, if desired. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Peppermint Frosting

Makes about 2 cups

¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract
2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon (15 grams) heavy whipping cream

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and salt at medium speed until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in extracts. Gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating at low speed until combined. Add cream; increase mixer speed to medium-high, and beat until light and airy, 1 to 2 minutes. Use immediately.

CRANBERRY CHEESECAKE COOKIES

Makes 24 cookies

Cheesecake lovers will fall for these soft-batch graham cookies topped with Cream Cheese Buttercream and dollops of jeweled Cranberry Sauce. Soft and pillowy, these cookies are the perfect mix of sweet and tart!

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 4 ounces (113 grams) cream cheese, room temperature
- ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar, plus more for rolling
- ¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- 2¼ cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon (3 grams) cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- Graham cracker crumbs, for rolling
- Cream Cheese Buttercream (recipe follows)
- Cranberry Sauce (recipe follows)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and cream cheese at medium speed until smooth. Add sugars, and beat until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg and vanilla until combined.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined. Cover, and refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Using a 1½-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and roll in granulated sugar to coat; roll in graham cracker crumbs to coat. Place 2 inches apart on prepared pans.
5. Bake until golden and tops and edges are set, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Place Cream Cheese Buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a 1-inch closed star tip (Wilton No. 2D). Pipe a ring of buttercream around edges of each cookie. Pipe or spoon Cranberry Sauce in center of buttercream ring. Serve immediately.

Cream Cheese Buttercream

Makes about 2 cups

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 4 ounces (113 grams) cream cheese, room temperature
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- 3 cups (360 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, cream cheese, and salt at medium speed until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in vanilla. Gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating at low speed until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium-high, and beat until light and airy, 1 to 2 minutes. Use immediately.

Cranberry Sauce

Makes about 1½ cups

- 3 cups (330 grams) fresh or frozen* cranberries
- ¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons (30 grams) water
- ½ teaspoon (2 grams) almond extract

1. In a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan, cook cranberries, sugar, and salt over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until cranberries begin to burst and mixture is boiling. Reduce heat to low; stir in 2 tablespoons (30 grams) water and almond extract, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Transfer to a glass bowl, and let cool completely.

**If using frozen cranberries, there's no need to thaw—simply cook as directed.*

SNICKERDOODLE BISCOTTI

Makes 24 to 28 biscotti
(photo on page 86)

Golden cinnamon-sugar biscotti dipped in white chocolate make a delicious spin on classic snickerdoodle cookies! These twice-baked cookies bake up lightly golden and make a scrumptious treat with a cozy latte.

- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- ¼ cup (52 grams) brandy
- 3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature
- 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground cinnamon
- 10 ounces (283 grams) white chocolate, chopped

1. In a large bowl, whisk together ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar, melted butter, and brandy. Add eggs, one at a time, whisking until smooth after each addition. Stir in flour, baking powder, and salt until combined and no streaks of flour remain. Cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. Divide dough in half. Using moistened hands, shape each half into a 10x4-inch rectangle, and place on prepared pans. (Dough will be sticky; shaping with wet hands will help.)
4. In a small bowl, stir together cinnamon and remaining ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar. Sprinkle loaves generously with cinnamon sugar, gently pressing into dough.
5. Bake until pale golden, 24 to 25 minutes. Using parchment as handles, carefully remove from pans, and let cool on wire racks for 15 minutes. Leave oven on.
6. Using a serrated knife, cut loaves crosswise into about ¾-inch slices. Place slices, cut side down, on prepared pans.
7. Bake for 10 minutes. Turn slices, and bake until golden and edges are dry, about 10 minutes more. Let cool completely on pans.
8. In the top of a double boiler, melt white chocolate over simmering water until smooth and glossy. Dip bottom of cooled biscotti in melted white chocolate. Return dipped biscotti to pans. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 20 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

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Streusel Bars
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PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY
SARAH KIEFFER

SARAH KIEFFER

Sarah Kieffer spent many years baking at coffeehouses and bakeries in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the surrounding area before starting her website, *The Vanilla Bean Blog*. After her first cookbook, *The Vanilla Bean Baking Book* came out in 2016, she found her pan-banging cookie technique going viral once she introduced it in the New York Times. Her second cookbook, *100 Cookies*, came out in August, and includes an entire chapter of pan-banging cookies. When she is not baking (a rarity), you can find her reading and rereading her favorite books, spending time with her family, and drinking too much coffee. She dreams of opening up a neighborhood coffeehouse in the distant future.

Chocolate-Peppermint Pan-Banging Cookies
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CHEESECAKE BARS WITH CHOCOLATE AND CARAMEL

Makes about 24 bars

Cheesecake bars are a holiday favorite—they contain all the glory of cheesecake but are less fussy to make. This version swirls chocolate and caramel into the batter and is then topped with ganache.

- **1¼ cups (163 grams) graham cracker crumbs**
- **1½ cups (300 grams) plus 3 tablespoons (36 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **5 tablespoons (70 grams) unsalted butter, melted and divided**
- **3 (8-ounce) packages (680 grams) cream cheese, room temperature**
- **¾ cup (180 grams) sour cream, room temperature**
- **1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature**
- **4 ounces (113 grams) 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled**
- **⅓ cup (100 grams) caramel sauce**
- **6 ounces (175 grams) 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate, chopped**
- **¾ cup (180 grams) heavy whipping cream**

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Line a 13x9-inch baking pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together graham cracker crumbs and 3 tablespoons (36 grams) sugar. Using a silicone spatula, stir in 4 tablespoons (56 grams) melted butter until combined. Press mixture into bottom of prepared pan.
3. Bake for 10 minutes. Let cool completely. Wrap outside of pan in a double layer of foil, shiny side out. Leave oven on.
4. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese at medium speed until light and completely smooth, 4 to 6 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add remaining 1½ cups (300 grams) sugar, and beat at medium speed until well combined, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add sour cream, vanilla, and salt, and beat at medium speed for 2 to 3 minutes. With mixer on low speed, add eggs, one at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Using a silicone spatula, scrape sides and bottom of bowl, folding to ensure everything is combined.
5. Transfer ½ cup (about 120 grams) batter to a small bowl, and stir in melted chocolate. Pour remaining batter onto cooled crust, smoothing top with a small offset spatula. Alternately dollop chocolate batter and caramel sauce on top of plain batter. Drag tip of a butter knife through batter, creating swirls. Tap pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter a few times to release any air bubbles.
6. Bake until edges are puffed and set, center is jiggly, and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 150°F (65°C), 30 to 35 minutes. Turn oven off, and leave cheesecake in oven with door ajar for 30 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack. Cover with a piece of parchment paper, and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight.
7. In a small heatproof bowl, place chopped chocolate.
8. In a small saucepan, heat cream over medium-low heat just until bubbles form around edges of pan. (Do not boil.) Pour warm cream and remaining 1 tablespoon (14 grams) melted butter over chocolate; cover bowl with plastic wrap, and let stand for 5 minutes. Using a butter knife, stir until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Let cool to almost room temperature, about 20 minutes.
9. Stir cooled ganache a few times. Pour ganache in center of cold cheesecake. Using an offset spatula, spread ganache over cheesecake, carefully smoothing it out as you spread it to edges. Refrigerate until ganache is set, about 30 minutes.
10. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

Sarah's • MUST-BAKE •

"Somewhere in my late thirties I fell in love with crisp, buttery cookies (after only choosing gooey, chocolaty ones throughout my teens and twenties). While I love all the cookie recipes I contributed here, I am enamored with the Chocolate Orange Sables. They are perfectly crisp and buttery, and the hint of chocolate and orange are a perfect pairing."

CHOCOLATE ORANGE SABLÉS

Makes about 36 cookies

Sablés are rich and buttery on their own and are easily adapted to any flavor whim one may have. Chocolate and orange pair beautifully here: candied orange peel is delicious and elegant, and mini chocolate chips add just enough chocolate without overwhelming the flavor of the orange.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon (3 grams) orange zest
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- 2¼ cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup (32 grams) finely chopped candied orange peel*
- ¼ cup (43 grams) 46% cacao semisweet mini chocolate chips
- 1 cup (200 grams) turbinado sugar or sanding sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Add granulated sugar, orange zest, and salt, and beat until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrapes sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, beat in egg yolk and vanilla until combined. Add flour, and beat at low speed just until combined. Beat in candied orange peel and chocolate chips until combined.

2. Turn out dough onto a clean surface, and shape into a 12-inch-long log. Place on a piece of plastic wrap a few inches longer than dough log. Sprinkle turbinado sugar or sparkling sugar on log, covering outside of dough. Gently press sugar into dough with your hands. Wrap log in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours.

3. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper.

4. Using a serrated knife, slice dough log into ⅓-inch-thick rounds, and place about 2 inches apart on prepared pans.

5. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are very light golden brown and centers are still pale, 14 to 16 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let cool completely on pans on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

**Candied orange peel can be purchased online at* amazon.com.

CRANBERRY STREUSEL BARS

Makes about 24 bars

Cranberry desserts are often tart, but in this recipe, the fruit is tamed by sweetened condensed milk, making for a rich, creamy, crumbly bar. Make sure to use canned whole berry cranberry sauce and not gelled cranberry sauce. Cranberry liqueur will help bump the cranberry flavor, but it isn't essential to making them shine. I used red food coloring to make the filling a brighter shade of cranberry-pink. Even without it, the creamy filling has lovely pops of rosy cranberry color.

2 (14-ounce) cans (792 grams) sweetened condensed milk
1 cup (320 grams) canned whole berry cranberry sauce*
2 tablespoons (30 grams) heavy whipping cream
2 tablespoons (30 grams) cranberry liqueur* (optional)
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
1 teaspoon (5 grams) fresh lemon juice
¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt, divided
Red food coloring (optional)
2¼ cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour
1½ cups (144 grams) almond flour
½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2⅓ cups (256 grams) fresh or thawed frozen* cranberries

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together sweetened condensed milk, cranberry sauce, cream, liqueur (if using), vanilla, lemon juice, ¼ teaspoon salt, and food coloring (if using) until combined.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat flours, sugars, baking soda, and remaining ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) salt at low speed until combined. Add butter, and beat at medium speed until mixture is crumbly. Press half of flour mixture into bottom of prepared pan.
4. Bake for 10 minutes. Leave oven on.
5. Carefully spread condensed milk mixture onto prepared crust. Scatter fresh cranberries on top; sprinkle remaining flour mixture on top.
6. Bake until filling is set and does not jiggle and topping is light golden brown, 18 to 22 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Cover and refrigerate for 4 to 6 hours. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Serve cold or at room temperature. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

**I used Ocean Spray Whole Berry Cranberry Sauce. I like Tattersall Cranberry Liqueur, but cranberry schnapps is also an option. If using thawed frozen cranberries, pat dry.*

GINGER SUGAR COOKIES

Makes about 20 cookies

Sugar cookies are a holiday tradition, and this version includes ginger in fresh, ground, and crystallized form. These cookies are crisp on the outside and chewy in the center, making for a perfect bite.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2¼ cups (450 grams) granulated sugar, divided
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1 large egg yolk (19 grams), room temperature
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
2⅔ cups plus ¼ cup (364 grams) all-purpose flour
¾ teaspoon (3.25 grams) baking soda
¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) cream of tartar
¼ cup (43 grams) finely diced crystallized ginger
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground ginger

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Add 1¾ cups (350 grams) sugar and grated ginger, and beat at medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in egg, egg yolk, and vanilla until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, stir together flour, baking soda, salt, and cream of tartar. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed just until combined. Beat in crystallized ginger just until combined.
4. In another medium bowl, whisk together ground ginger and remaining ½ cup (100 grams) sugar.
5. Using a 2-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (about 45 grams each), and roll into balls. Roll each dough ball in ginger sugar, and place 3 inches apart on prepared pans.
6. Bake, one batch at a time, until edges are set and bottoms are light golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let cool on pan on a wire rack for 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

PUMPKIN BLONDIES

Makes about 24 bars

Blondies are a classic treat, but I am taking things up a notch with a swirl of both pumpkin and cream cheese. The result is a rich, dreamy bar that can be made for swanky dessert tables or to pack up in humble boxes to pass out to the neighbors.

- ¾ cup (183 grams) pumpkin purée
- 1⅓ cups (293 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar, divided
- ¾ teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1⅛ teaspoons (3 grams) kosher salt, divided
- 4 ounces (113 grams) cream cheese, room temperature
- 1¼ cups (250 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 1 tablespoon (13 grams) plus 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract, divided
- 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
- 14 tablespoons (196 grams) unsalted butter
- 2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature

1. In a small saucepan, stir together pumpkin, ⅓ cup (73 grams) brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and ⅛ teaspoon salt. Cook over medium heat until combined and some moisture from pumpkin has evaporated, about 10 minutes. Let cool completely.
2. In a small bowl, stir together cream cheese, ¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar, and 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla until smooth.
3. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter a 13x9-inch baking pan. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour and baking powder.
5. In a medium saucepan, melt butter, remaining 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, remaining 1 cup (220 grams) brown sugar, and remaining 1 teaspoon (3 grams) salt over medium heat. Remove from heat, and stir in remaining 1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla. Transfer to a large bowl, and let cool for about 15 minutes.
6. Add eggs to butter mixture, and whisk until combined. Stir in flour mixture just until combined. Pour batter into prepared pan, spread into an even layer. Alternately dollop pumpkin mixture and cream cheese mixture on top of batter. Drag the tip of a butter knife through batter, creating swirls.
7. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few moist crumbs, 30 to 38 minutes, covering with foil halfway through baking to prevent excess browning. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

PRO TIP

Leave a small space in the center of the batter unswirled. This is the spot you want to insert your wooden pick into to check when the bars are done, as the cream cheese and pumpkin swirls will remain wet throughout baking.

MERINGUES WITH CACAO NIBS AND CARAMEL SWIRL

Adapted from 100 Cookies *(Chronicle, 2020)*

Makes 24 meringues

Meringues always look so impressive, with their swoops and swirls and crisp white exterior. I've stirred in some cacao nibs for crunch and swirled in some homemade Caramel for extra extravagance.

- **2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1 cup (240 grams) egg whites (from about 8 large eggs), room temperature**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **⅛ teaspoon cream of tartar**
- **¼ cup (40 grams) cacao nibs, finely chopped**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract**
- **½ cup (180 grams) Caramel (recipe follows)**

1. Position oven racks in upper- and lower-middle positions of oven. Preheat oven to 200°F (93°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the heatproof bowl of a stand mixer, using a rubber spatula, gently stir together sugar, egg whites, salt, and cream of tartar until combined. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula and scraping sides of bowl, until sugar is melted and an instant-read thermometer registers 160°F (71°C), 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Return bowl to stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, beat at low speed for 1 minute; slowly increase mixer speed to medium-high, and beat until glossy stiff peaks form and bowl is cool to the touch, 8 to 10 minutes. Add cacao nibs and vanilla, and beat at medium-low speed until combined.
4. Using a spoon, scoop mixture, and place 12 mounds on each prepared pan. Using the back of a wet spoon, smooth top of each mound. Place 1 teaspoon (7.5 grams) Caramel on top of each mound; using the tip of a butter knife, swirl Caramel into top of mounds.
5. Bake for 1 hour. Turn oven off, and leave meringues in oven with door closed for 30 minutes. Let cool completely on pans on wire racks. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 days.

Caramel

Makes 1½ cups

- **1¼ cups (250 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) water**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ cup (120 grams) heavy whipping cream**
- **5 tablespoons (76 grams) unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces**
- **1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract**

1. In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, very gently stir together sugar, ¼ cup (60 grams) water, and salt. Cover with lid, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat; cook until sugar is melted and mixture is clear, 3 to 5 minutes. Uncover and cook until sugar is pale golden brown and a candy thermometer registers 300°F (150°C). Reduce heat, and cook until deep golden brown and a candy thermometer registers 325°F (170°C). Remove from heat, and add cream. (Mixture will bubble up vigorously, so be careful.) Add butter; add vanilla, and stir to combine. Let cool to room temperature. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

CHOCOLATE-PEPPERMINT PAN-BANGING COOKIES

Makes 12 cookies

(photo on page 100)

Chocolate and peppermint is a classic holiday combination, bringing to mind so many good memories: peppermint hot chocolate, peppermint mochas, cakes, and ice cream. Here, I combined the pair in pan-banging form, making a cookie with crisp outer edges, a gooey chocolate center, and a peppermint crunch top.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **1½ cups (300 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) water**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) peppermint extract**
- **2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon (32 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda**
- **4 ounces (113 grams) 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate, roughly chopped**
- **2 ounces (57 grams) 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate, melted**
- **10 peppermint candies (60 grams), crushed**

1. Position oven rack in center of oven. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 3 baking sheets with foil, dull side up.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Add sugars, and beat at medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add egg, 2 tablespoons (30 grams) water, and extracts, and beat at low speed until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, salt, and baking soda. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed until combined. Beat in chopped chocolate. Using a ¼-cup spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough (85 grams each), and roll into balls. Place 4 dough balls on each prepared pan.
4. Bake, one batch at a time, until dough balls have spread flat but centers are puffed slightly, about 9 minutes; lift one side of pan about 4 inches, and gently let it drop against oven rack so edges of cookies set and centers fall back down. Bake until centers are puffed, about 2 minutes more; lift one side of pan about 4 inches, and gently let it drop against oven rack. Bake for 2 minutes more, and repeat lifting and dropping of pan to create ridges around edges of cookies. Bake until cookies have spread out and edges are set and rippled but centers are still soft, 2 to 3 minutes more. Let cool on pans on wire racks for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
Drizzle melted chocolate onto cookies; sprinkle candies onto melted chocolate. Let stand until chocolate is set, about 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 days, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Holiday
cookies
bake FROM SCRATCH
67 Exclusive Recipes from All-Star Bakers
Holiday Hits: Peppermint, Gingerbread, and More!
How to Decorate Cookies Like a Pro

on the cover

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT BY
EMILY HUTCHINSON

FOOD STYLING BY
MEGAN LANKFORD

STYLING BY MELISSA STURDIVANT SMITH

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Brian's navy and gold bowl is from Fenella Smith's John Whaite collection, available at *fenellasmith.com*. Brian's white ceramic bowl is from Morgan Stoneware, available at *morganstoneware.com*.
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Pottery platter is from Morgan Stoneware, available at *morganstoneware.com*. Holiday linen is from Bobbins Design, available at *bobbinsdesign.com*.

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